Proposal

West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
ARFP DNR18*01
Wonderful West Virginia Magazine
Editorial, Layout and Design, and Social Media Services

Submitted to:
Division of Natural Resources
Property & Procurement Office
324 4th Avenue
South Charleston, WV 25303

Vendor:

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(signature) (date) July 23, 2018

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Attachment A: Vendor Response Sheet

Since its creation, *Wonderful West Virginia* has showcased West Virginia's greatest assets—our wild and wonderful natural resources. For the past three years, it has been a great honor for the entire New South Media team to work on *Wonderful West Virginia* and to be a part of its legacy.

This proposal is in response to West Virginia Department of Administration Purchasing Division's RFP for West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, DNR18*01, for the editorial, design, layout, and social media services of *Wonderful West Virginia* magazine. As the state's largest publisher of high-quality magazines, New South Media, Inc. is uniquely qualified to handle the monthly editorial, photographic, layout, design, and social media needs of *Wonderful West Virginia.*

Company Background and Experience

In 2008, West Virginia native Nikki Bowman moved back to her home state to start her company, New South Media, Inc.—a publishing company focused on creating regional publications for national audiences. New South Media, Inc. is a woman-owned multimedia company. Since launching her first magazine, *WV Living*, in 2008, the company has witnessed tremendous growth. Today, New South Media publishes *WV Living, WV Weddings, Morgantown*, and several custom publications.

New South Media, Inc. is the publisher of high-quality magazines. On average we create the editorial content, copyediting, photography, and design of 92 magazine issues a year. We also manage the distribution and circulation of each of our publications. We are accustomed to working with tight deadlines, planning editorial in advance, and managing photography months and sometimes a year in advance so that photos are season-appropriate. New South Media employs two talented graphic designers, two photographers, four editors/writers, a web/social media manager, a subscription/circulation manager, and an advertising sales team, so we are well positioned to handle the editorial, design, and social media schedule of *Wonderful West Virginia*. The company hires freelance writers and photographers to supplement its in-house efforts.

WV Living is the state's premier lifestyle, business, travel, and arts and culture magazine. It showcases the best the state has to offer with positive stories about West Virginia's small towns, charming shops, cutting-edge restaurants, regional recipes, and talented craftsmen. *WV Living* is published quarterly and is sold in more than 24 states and in Canada. *WV Weddings* is the state's bridal bible. It was originally published annually, but because it reached nearly 700 pages, it was divided in 2013 into two seasonal issues a year. *Morgantown* magazine, published every other month, champions the state's fastest-growing city and serves as a resource for attracting businesses and meeting the needs of the town's young professional demographic.

New South Media also has a custom publishing arm. In 2012, the company saw the opportunity to promote West Virginia to a more national audience when West Virginia University joined the Big 12 Conference. The company created *The Ultimate Sports and Travel Guide to the Big 12*, a lifestyle and sports publication that covered each of the Big 12 schools and each of their towns as tourist destinations. Its 100,000 copies sold out on newsstands nationwide. In 2013, with the opening of the Bechtel Summit Reserve and the Boy Scout Jamboree in West Virginia, the company once again saw the need for the creation of a targeted national publication championing the state. New South Media worked with the Division of Tourism and created *Explore: Reaching the Summit*. This piece was mailed to each of the troop leaders across the country. Since then, New South Media has worked closely with the state's Tourism office to create several high-caliber publications.

We have our fingers on the pulse of West Virginia and have worked hard at building relationships with our state agencies, our state parks, our travel industry leaders, our small towns, our artists, and our citizens. We have championed the people who are out in the field protecting our wildlife, showcased our unique destinations, and provided entertaining and educational stories on everything from lightning bugs to lizards. During the past three years of working on *Wonderful West Virginia*, we've built unparalleled connections with our state's finest photographers and writers. Our expertise has also helped the magazine appeal to a younger audience.

New South Media would welcome the opportunity to continue to utilize our talented editorial and creative staff to improve and grow the *Wonderful West Virginia* brand. We feel that we are uniquely situated to provide unparalleled content, photography, and creative direction, as well as manage all social media efforts to increase visibility of the publication. By allowing our editorial team to manage the social media component of promoting stories, events, DNR initiatives, etc., we will be better able to promote *Wonderful West Virginia*, increase the visibility and readership engagement, attract a younger audience, and serve as a more complete mouthpiece for DNR.

Current New South Media, Inc. Capabilities:
Writing, Research, and Editing
Photography and Photography Editing
Graphic Design
Copyediting
Art Direction
Subscription and Newsstand Management
Video Production
Website Development

Social Media Creation and Management
Book Publishing
Promotional Material Design and Production

New South Media's Full-Time Employees

Nikki Bowman, President/Publisher/Editorial Director
Writing and Editing: 20 years of experience
Publisher: 10 years of experience
Photography: 20 years of experience
Bachelor of Arts from WVU
Masters in Writing from DePaul University

Zack Harold, Managing Editor of *Wonderful West Virginia*
Writing and Editing: 10 years of experience
Bachelor of Arts from University of Charleston

Pam Kasey, Associate Editor and Managing Editor of *Morgantown*
Writing and Editing: 22 years of experience
Bachelor of Arts from University of Chicago
Masters in Journalism from WVU

Carla Witt Ford, Photographer and Graphic Designer
Photography: 35 years of experience
Graphic Design: 11 years of experience
Bachelor of Science from Fairmont State University
Bachelor of Fine Arts from WVU School of Design

Becky Moore, Designer
Graphic Design: 7 years of experience
Bachelor of Fine Arts from WVU

Eric Palfrey, Social Media/Video Manager
Video Production: 17 years of experience
Social Media Management: 8 years of experience
Web Design: 8 years of experience

Holly Thubron, Circulation and Office Manager
Circulation Management: 1 year of experience
Bachelor of Arts from LSU

Heather Mills, Director of Sales
Advertising & Media Sales: 29 years of experience
Media Sales Management: 4 years of experience
Graphic Design: 5 years of experience

Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, Advertising sequence, Marshall University

Bryson Taylor, Account Executive
Advertising Sales: 7 years of experience
Bachelor of Arts from Alderson-Broaddus College
Master of Arts from WVU

New South Media typically hires two to three interns a semester and during the summer. These interns write smaller stories, do research, and create web content. In addition to the New South Media staff, the following freelancers have most recently been used and may potentially be used in the future:

Writers:
Jake Stump
Lori Kersey
Anna Patrick
Kris Wise
Wendy Holdren
Mikenna Pierotti
Dylan Jones
J. Kendall Perkinson
Jennifer Gardner
Heather Greenfield
Jody Murphy
Ashton Marra

Photographers:
Van Slider
Jesse Thornton
Tyler Evert
Curt Helmick
Steve Shaluta
Gabe DeWitt
Kevin Frick
Leiane Gibson
Kent Mason
Bryan Lemasters
Kevin Jack
Roger Spencer
Randall Sanger
Walter Scriptunas II
Kevin King
Kevin Funk
Clayton Spangler
LJ Lambert
Joey Herron

Josh Shackleford
Tessa Nickels
Samuel Taylor
Matt Dieterich
Rick Morrison
Danny Snyder
Carla Witt Ford

Graphic Designers:
Nikki Butler

Enclosed you will find samples of some of our publications, including previous issues of *Wonderful West Virginia.* As you will see, great photography, clean design, and engaging editorial are paramount to our publications.

In establishing the editorial calendar, there always needs to be a balance of topics that will appeal to the current readership while attempting to attract new readers. In maintaining DNR's mission of championing conservation, exploration, and enjoyment of natural resources, we will continue to include stories on our natural assets—our state parks, wildlife, botany, unique places and destinations, and our incredible experts in the field.

Below are suggestions for a spring and summer story:

Spring
A profile of Patrick Falbo, new chef at The Vista Restaurant at the Hawks Nest State Park lodge. Falbo has more than 20 years of experience in the restaurant industry, is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in New York, and has worked as a sous chef at restaurants in Sarasota, Florida, as well as the noted Inn at Little Washington in northern Virginia. The article would follow Falbo through a day in the kitchen while also telling the history of The Vista Restaurant and detailing its recent renovations.

Summer
On April 6, 1938, the Civilian Conservation Corps set up camp at the mouth of Shrewsbury Hollow, about seven miles south of Charleston. Under the direction of foreman Donald Kuhn, the crew would painstakingly transform this area into a state treasure: Kanawha State Forest. Kuhn's descendants are now scattered all over the East Coast but, each June, they make a pilgrimage to the state forest and pitch their tents on

the site of the old CCC camp. The Kuhn Family & Friends Reunion began at the request of Donald's son Elson Kuhn, who worked on his father's CCC crew, and just before Elson died in 2003, he asked that his family continue the tradition after his passing. In addition to telling the story of the Kuhn family, the article would allow us to dive into the CCC's lasting impact on state parks and forests.

Attached is a fully designed article on French Creek Freddie.

We believe the design and editorial changes that we introduced when awarded the contract three years ago have modernized the interior design of the publication. Updating and giving the interior a cleaner design has made the articles easier to read, and it has also made it more appealing to a younger audience. However, the nature of the contract did not allow us to engage in promoting stories, interacting with readers, and creating initiatives to raise the visibility. I believe that allowing the editorial team to manage the social media promotion of *Wonderful West Virginia* will be a great step in growing readership and engaging a larger audience.

One change that we would suggest is the creation of a new website for the publication, where stories can be uploaded and then shared via social media channels. The current website provides PDFs of a few articles, and is not responsive. This doesn't allow for good social media interaction or the sharing of the stories to a larger audience. PDFs are also not searchable by Google bots. And because it's not responsive, the site is not easily navigated or viewed on mobile phones. A simple and responsive WordPress website would go a long way toward raising the visibility of *Wonderful West Virginia*. It would also allow us to track metrics—which stories are most popular, how well Facebook versus Twitter is pushing people to the website, etc. The splash page could be a slideshow of the Gallery photographs. The website would also give the magazine another platform for engaging with readers. Reader-submitted photos could be featured, personal essays and other stories that may not have room in print could be shared online, and archived content could be highlighted.

Building out a simple magazine website would not be difficult or cost-prohibitive. New South Media has experience in creating these sites; in fact, all of our magazines utilize WordPress templates. It would be important to choose a publisher that could seamlessly integrate and transfer the designed publication and photography onto an easy-to-manage website, and New South Media could help DNR accomplish this.

New South Media will work closely with DNR's Chief of Administration, Customer Relations Director, and any/all designated individuals, and welcomes regular meetings in person or by phone as needed. New South Media is available to meet with the printer as needed; however, most printers today rely on digital proofing systems rather than press checks.

New South Media understands our role as prime contractor and has included the list of freelancers we could potentially use in the future. See page 6 and 7.

Three years ago, New South Media helped create a more efficient timeline for the magazine. It has adhered to that schedule and believes that this timeline has proven manageable by all parties.

A list of New South Media employees outlining their individual qualifications is provided in Section 4, Subsection 4.2.1.2. See page 5.

For 10 years, New South Media has been creating, designing, and managing high-quality print and digital publications. We enjoy a reputation in the region for producing top-notch, beautiful, and well-written printed pieces. Our mission with every project we work on is to change the perception of our state by telling our state's story through the written word and through inspiring photography. We manage a highly skilled freelance team of writers and photographers. Our talented design team identifies amazing photographs that will translate well into print and has created an unparalleled network of the state's finest photographers. Because we have talented photographers on staff, we are also able to supplement our magazines with photography as needed.

Each of our publications has several associated social media platforms--Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram. We utilize social media to promote each publication multiple times a day on multiple platforms. We would do the same for *Wonderful West Virginia*--we could even cross promote on our other publication's social media pages to help grow *Wonderful West Virginia*'s following as well.

We work with several printers in and out of state to manage the print process and distribution of these publications in a cost-effective manner. We are very attentive to the press-check process. In fact, when we have suspicions that something may not print well, we work with the printer to head off any printing problems. Our lead designer for *Wonderful West Virginia*, Carla Witt Ford, is also an accomplished photographer and is highly skilled in photo editing. When photos are needed for *Wonderful West Virginia a*nd we can't locate high resolution images, she will often travel and photograph the topic to supplement the story. Our team is well versed in modern technology and we take pride in creating the best publications possible and delivering those publications with attentive customer service.

A sampling of past publications where New South Media created the editorial content, managed the photography, and designed printed magazines are:

***WV Living* magazine** – 2008 to present
***WV Weddings* magazine** – 2009 to present
***Morgantown* magazine** – 2011 to present
***Wonderful West Virginia* magazine** – 2015 to present
***WV Focus* magazine** – 2014-2016
The Ultimate Sports and Travel Guide to the Big 12 – 2012
Explore Elkins – 2013-2014
Explore: Reaching the Summit – 2013
Explore: Adventures on the Gorge – 2014-2016
Explore: Real WV – 2016
The U.S. Small Business Administration's Small Business Resource Guide – 2017 to present

Section 4, Subsection 4.3.1.2: New South Media's Social Media Experience

New South Media has a designated full-time staff person who is responsible for uploading website content; promoting content and engagement initiatives through social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest; and overseeing initiatives meant to grow followers and readers of the print magazines. We also have interns from WVU. Our policy is to respond to comments within 1 hour. We currently manage multiple social media platforms for *WV Living, Morgantown*, and *WV Weddings* magazines.

Our team of editors also participates in establishing a social media calendar, creating promotions, and pushing out content via social media channels. Our editors have admin privileges on all the social media sites so that there is never a lapse. We have a policy for identifying and dealing with spam comments, inappropriate comments, and hostile comments.

New South Media could seamlessly take over the administration of the Facebook account for *Wonderful West Virginia*. We would create a Twitter account and an Instagram account that could be tied in with our popular Wondergram initiative. We would create a social media calendar alongside the editorial calendar so that they work together. We would post content several times a day across several platforms. These platforms would not only be used to push out content from the printed magazine, but they could also be used to engage readers, educate them on other matters important to DNR, share events, and grow subscriptions. For example, some social media techniques we would use would be:

- Launch a photography competition.
- Post questions that engage reader response like "What is your favorite state park? Why?" "Share your favorite childhood hunting story," or "Give 10 gift subscriptions and win an overnight stay at Blackwater Falls State Park."
- When DNR releases its trout-stocking schedule, we can post that schedule with links to articles we've done in the past on trout or fly-fishing.
- Host a Choose a Cover competition by posting a couple of potential covers for upcoming issues and allowing readers to vote on their favorite.
- Create challenges like visit a state park and take a selfie in front of the sign, a photo of a fiddlehead fern, and a photo of a cardinal. Submit the three photos for a chance to win sledding tickets at Blackwater Falls State Park.
- Share stories from the archives.
- Instagram lends itself to promoting great photography. We could promote slideshows of places, animals, plants, etc. that tie into a story in a current issue.

Ideas like this will help reinvigorate the *Wonderful West Virginia* brand and engage a more vested audience.

ADDENDUM ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM
SOLICITATION NO.: ARFQ DNR18*29

Instructions: Please acknowledge receipt of all addenda issued with this solicitation by completing this addendum acknowledgment form. Check the box next to each addendum received and sign below. Failure to acknowledge addenda may result in bid disqualification.

Acknowledgment: I hereby acknowledge receipt of the following addenda and have made the necessary revisions to my proposal, plans and/or specification, etc.

Addendum Numbers Received:
(Check the box next to each addendum received)

- [x] Addendum No. 1
- [ ] Addendum No. 2
- [ ] Addendum No. 3
- [ ] Addendum No. 4
- [ ] Addendum No. 5
- [ ] Addendum No. 6
- [ ] Addendum No. 7
- [ ] Addendum No. 8
- [ ] Addendum No. 9
- [ ] Addendum No. 10

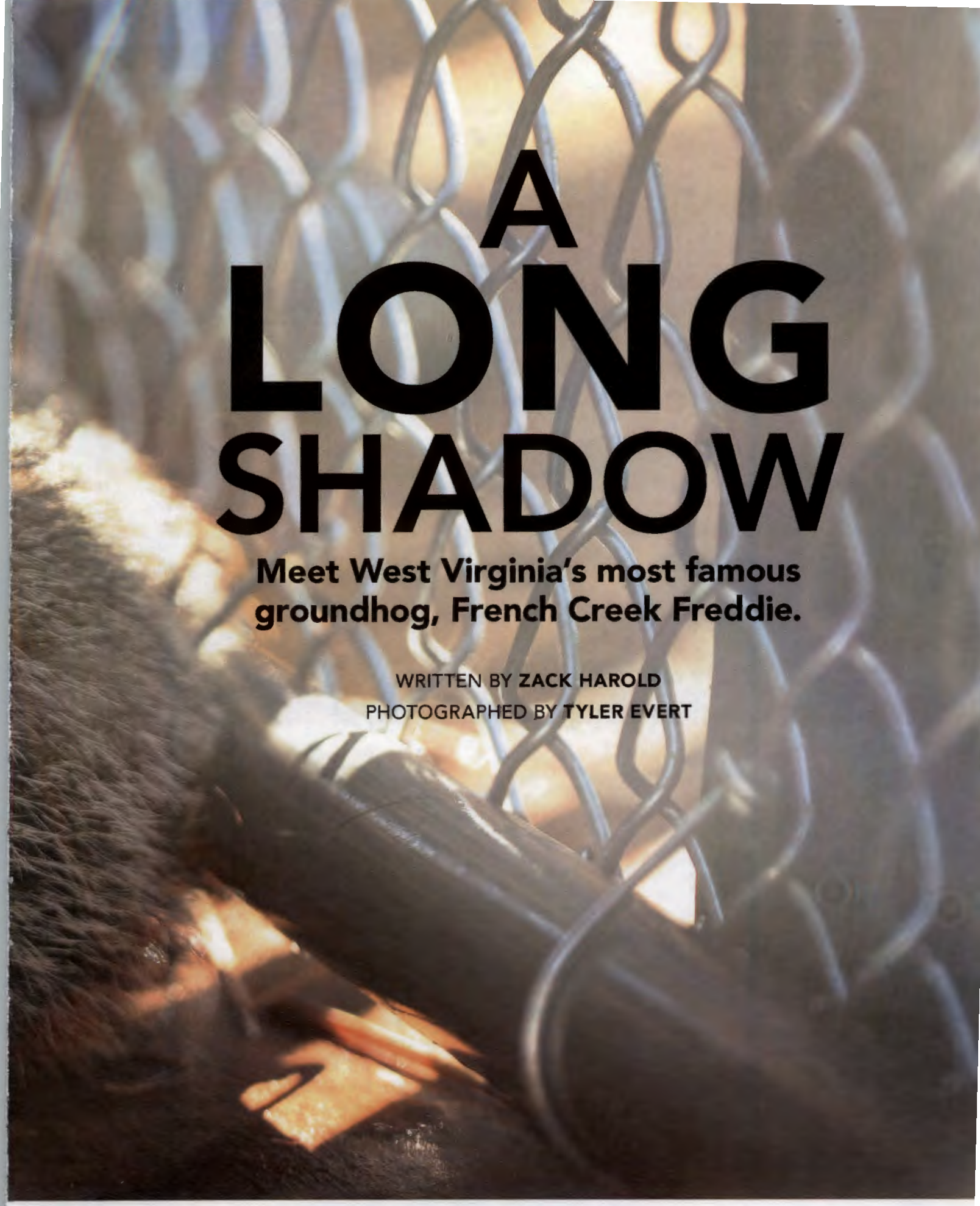
I understand that failure to confirm the receipt of addenda may be cause for rejection of this bid. I further understand that any verbal representation made or assumed to be made during any oral discussion held between Vendor's representatives and any state personnel is not binding. Only the information issued in writing and added to the specifications by an official addendum is binding.

New South Media, Inc.
Company

Authorized Signature

May 30, 2018
Date

NOTE: This addendum acknowledgement should be submitted with the bid to expedite document processing.



A LONG SHADOW

Meet West Virginia's most famous groundhog, French Creek Freddie.

WRITTEN BY **ZACK HAROLD**
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **TYLER EVERT**

It was a miserable morning at the West Virginia State Wildlife Center in French Creek. The temperature hovered around 11 degrees. Hazy clouds shrouded the weak winter sun. Snowflakes fell lazily to the ground. In other words, it was the perfect weather for Groundhog Day 2018.

The 140 people seated at the wildlife center's amphitheater huddled together against the bitter cold. They knew what would happen when the clock struck 10 a.m. French Creek Freddie would emerge from his den—with some help from resident wildlife biologist Tyler Evans, of course. Since the sun was not shining, he would not see his shadow, would not be scared back into his burrow, and would thus usher in an early spring.

Then things took a turn for the worse. The snow stopped. The clouds parted. The sun shone down. Freddie saw his shadow, dooming West Virginia to six more weeks of winter. "Some folks cheered, some booed, some just sighed," read the wildlife center's official press release.

No one is sure how many groundhogs have served as French Creek Freddie since the tradition began in the 1970s.

Merry Candlemas

Because ancient cultures marked the passage of time using heavenly bodies, not clocks and calendars, their holidays corresponded with phases of the sun and moon. "Imbolc" was one such holiday. European pagans recognized this day, which usually fell on the first or second day of February, as the beginning of spring.

The Catholic Church later adopted Imbolc and renamed it "Candlemas," to commemorate the day Mary presented baby Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem. But the day's association with the beginning of spring did not wane, as evidenced by the old Scottish rhyme:

"If Candlemas day be dry and fair,
The half o' winter to come and mair,
If Candlemas day be wet and foul,
The half of winter's gone at Yule."

The day also became associated with animals, since many hibernators seemed to wake from their wintertime slumber at Candlemas. In parts of Eastern Europe, like Romania, people looked to bears to predict the springtime thaw. The French used marmots, the English had hedgehogs, and Germans relied on badgers.

Groundhogs are the largest member of the squirrel family and, like their kinfolk, subsist mostly on grasses, berries, nuts, and small insects. Despite this largely vegetarian diet, the animals can get quite hefty. "With that frame, you could easily get into the 10 to 15 pound range," Evans says.

The tradition came to the New World with the Pennsylvania Dutch. These German immigrants could not find any badgers in their new home, so they switched to groundhogs.

The first recorded mention of Groundhog Day came in 1841 when James Morris, a storekeeper in Morgantown, Pennsylvania, wrote in his diary:

"Last Tuesday, the 2nd, was Candlemas day, the day on which, according to the Germans, the Groundhog peeps out of his winter quarters and if he sees his shadow he pops back for another six weeks nap, but if the day be cloudy he remains out, as the weather is to be moderate."

"We'd play it to the hilt, of course."

West Virginia got its own whistlepig prognosticator in the late 1970s. It's unclear exactly when the tradition started. The wildlife center's official record says 1978, but there are newspaper clippings that mention French Creek Freddie in 1977.

Bill Vanscoy became superintendent of the French Creek Game Farm in 1972. He was always trying to find ways to drum up public interest and, one January, someone came into his office talking about Punxsutawney Phil, the world-famous Pennsylvania groundhog. "I said, 'He's not the only groundhog in the world,'" Vanscoy remembers.

The game farm—which would be renamed the West Virginia State Wildlife Center in the 1980s—usually had a few groundhogs scurrying around. "People would think it would be a great pet, find out it was more trouble than it was worth, and bring it to us," Vanscoy says. So he made a few calls, offering up one of his woodchuck weathermen to members of the media. When one of those reporters asked for the groundhog's name, Vanscoy ad libbed. "I said his name was French Creek Freddie."

To Vanscoy's mind, the groundhog became a kind of public service. "About the second of February is when everybody needs a little levity in their lives," he says. "We'd play it to the hilt, of course." For a few years in the mid-1980s, Freddie would not emerge willingly from his den and Vanscoy opted to let him sleep. "I'm beginning to suspect that earthquakes, El Nino, acid rain, and other disasters may be the result of waking up groundhogs," he told the Associated

> "ABOUT THE SECOND OF FEBRUARY IS WHEN EVERYBODY NEEDS A LITTLE LEVITY IN THEIR LIVES."
>
> **BILL VANSCOY**

Art Shomo, coordinator of the DNR's Project Wild program, shakes hands with the mascot version of French Creek Freddie.

Press in 1986, tongue firmly in cheek. "We're upsetting the natural order of things."

Another time, a reporter from a TV station in Charleston wanted to record her stand-up with Freddie in the background. "We set Freddie down and he went over and bit her on the boot. She squealed like she was being attacked by a tyrannosaurus rex."

Vanscoy, who retired in 2001, is now writing a book about his time at the wildlife center, tentatively titled *Bears in the Basement, Coons in the Kitchen*. "I've been bit, kicked, or scratched by everything that is or was native to West Virginia," he says. And yes, Freddie will feature prominently in the narrative.

There's Always Next Year

The crowd at French Creek did not disperse after Freddie rendered his forecast for 2018. The festivities were not over. Some attendees retreated to the center's gift shop for cookies, coffee, hot cocoa, and a performance by the band Enny Corner, who wrote the event's official theme song: "Are You Ready for French Creek Freddie?"

Others busied themselves with a wood chucking contest, tossing pieces of timber at a target to see whose would land closest. Freddie was too busy with the news media to finally put to rest the immortal question about woodchucks and their wood-chucking abilities.

But what about his weather forecasting abilities? As far as Vanscoy is concerned, Freddie maintains a 100 percent accuracy rate. "How do you tell the difference between six more weeks of bad weather and early spring?" he says. "Well, of course, nobody can."

Evans, the wildlife center's current wildlife biologist, fears Freddie's latest prediction might be part of a trend. He also saw his shadow in 2016 and 2017, after about seven years of predicting early springs. "He went from being really optimistic to not so optimistic. He's back to being glass half empty," Evans says.

HOG HEAVEN

The West Virginia State Wildlife Center will host its annual Groundhog Day celebration on Saturday, February 2, 2019. For more information, call 304.924.6211 or visit *wvdnr.gov/Wildlife/WildlifeCenter.shtm*.

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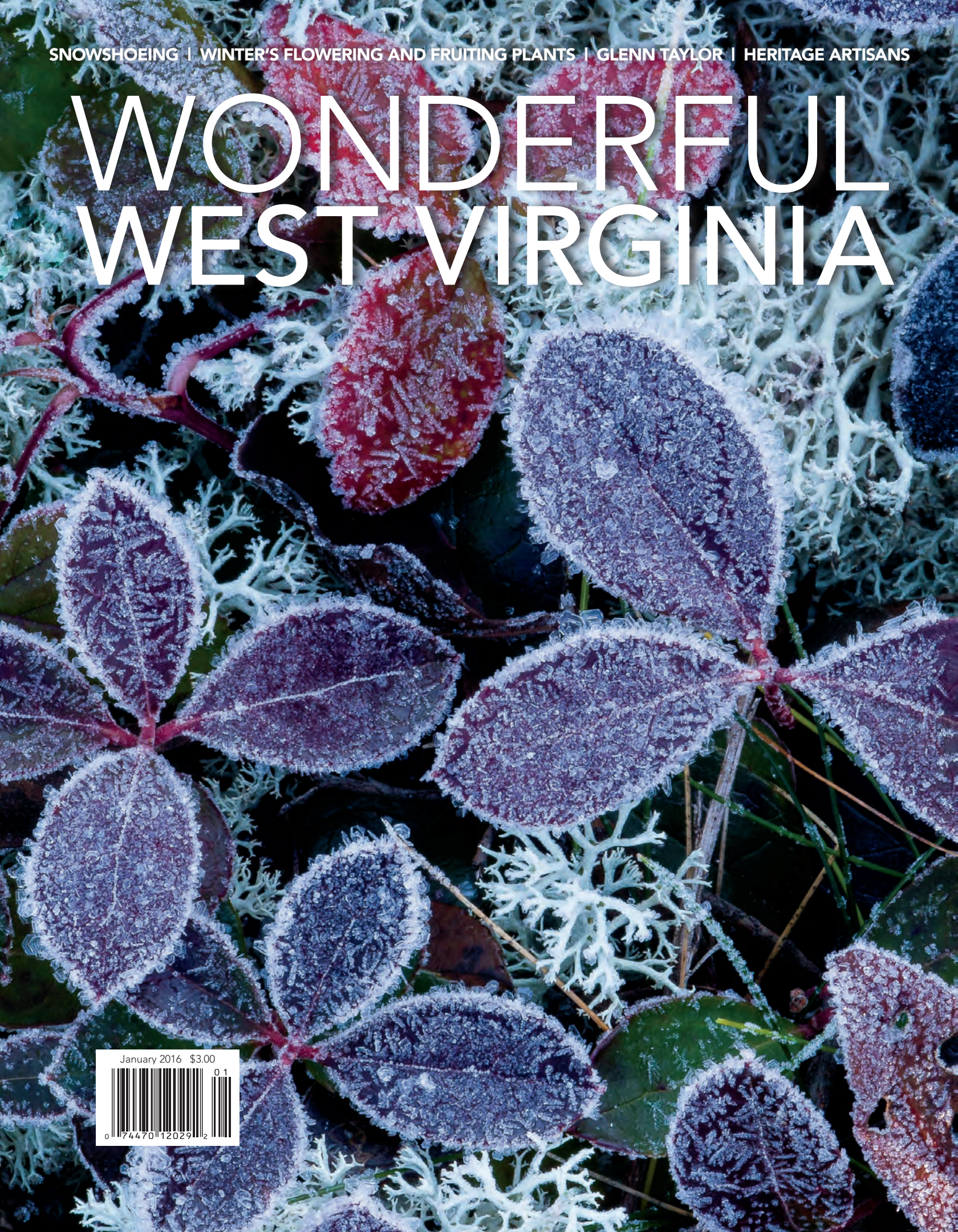
WONDERFUL WEST VIRGINIA



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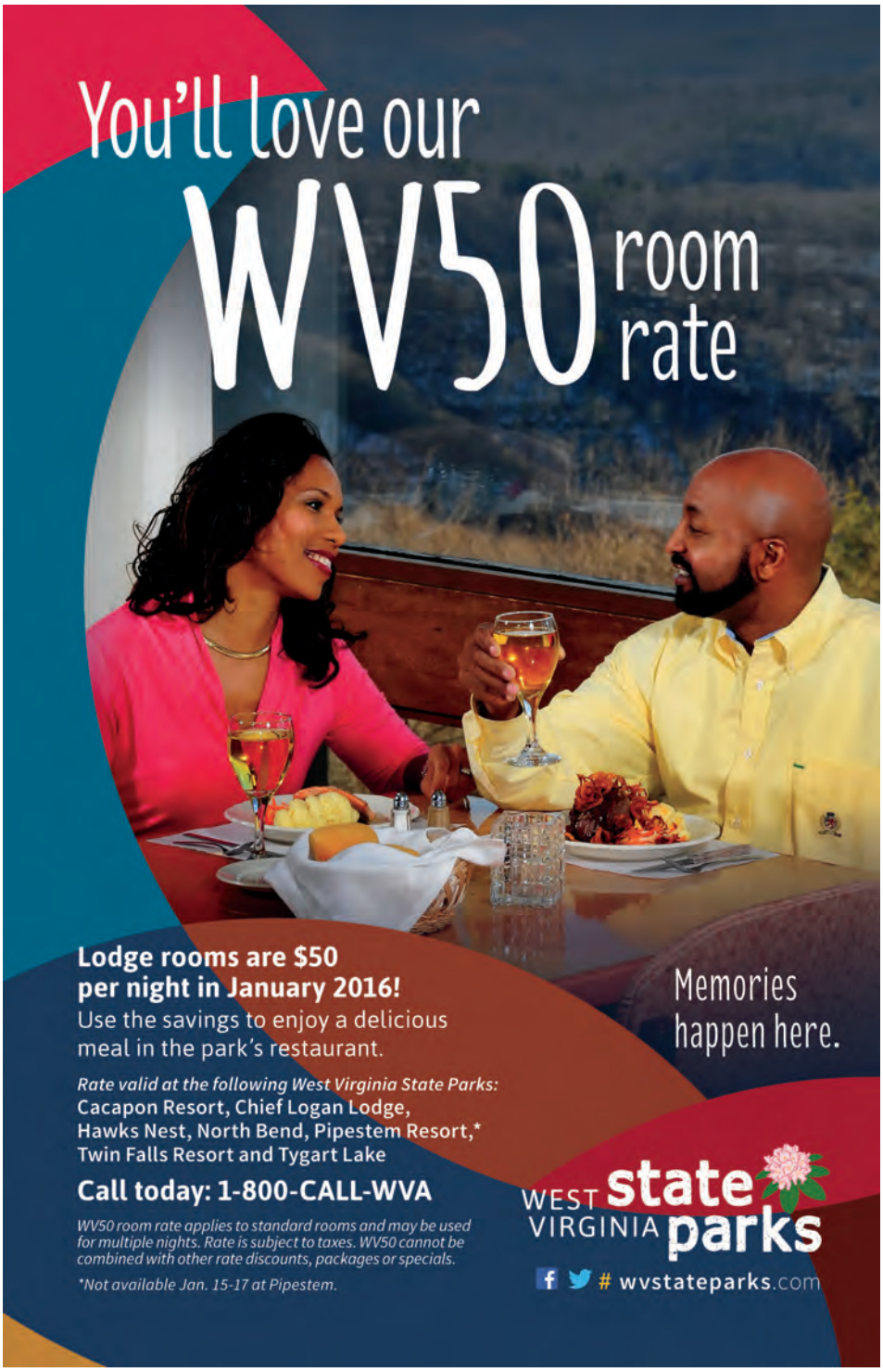

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Emily J. Fleming
Deputy Director, Division of Natural Resources

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Katie Griffith, *Managing Editor*

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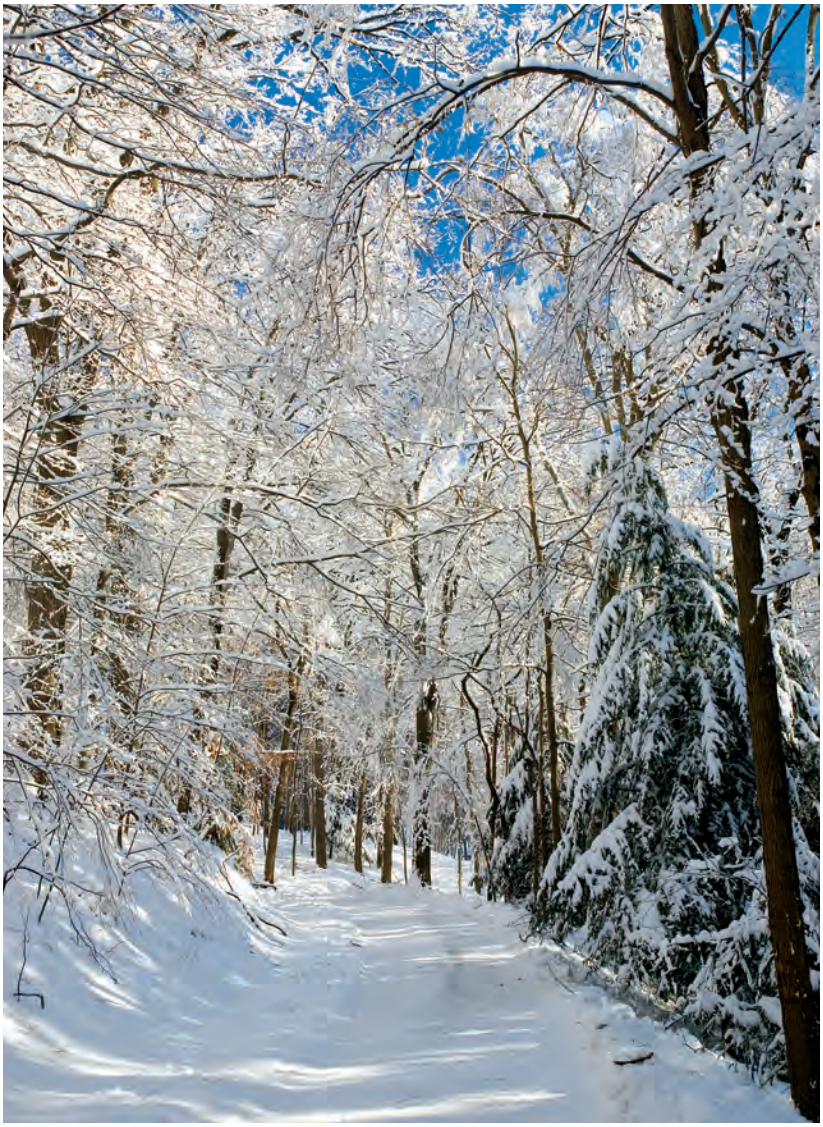
ON THE COVER Plants covered in a heavy frost near a bog at Dolly Sods photographed by Kent Mason Photography, *wvphotographs.com*

JANUARY

VOLUME 80 NUMBER 1



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By Hanna Wheeler Galinat

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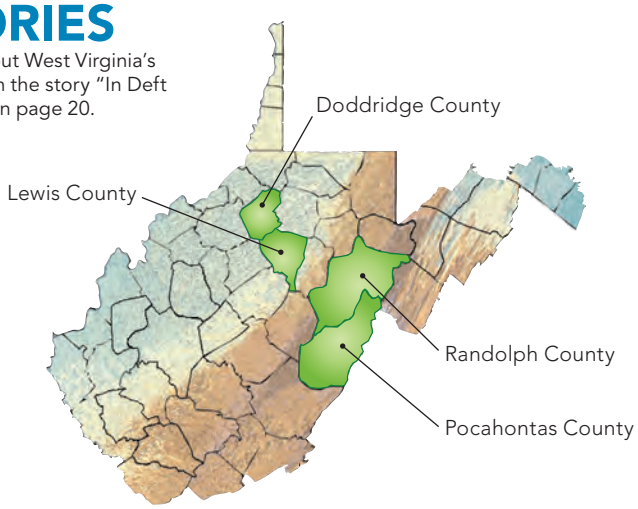
A WINTRY WALK
For hundreds of years, people have enjoyed the quiet of a forest blanketed in snow while on snowshoes.
By Shay Maunz

MAP THE STORIES

Read about West Virginia's artisans in the story "In Deft Hands" on page 20.



DEPARTMENTS

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32 WONDERgrams

Snow-covered road at Olgebay Resort & Conference Center in Wheeling photographed by Roger Spencer Photography, *rogerspencer.com*

West Virginia
Wild and Wonderful

Tucker County's roads turn into a winter wonderland when snow falls.

Since you are a reader of *Wonderful West Virginia*, I think you'll agree that our West Virginia heritage is unique. I never tire of saying we need to wear our heritage like a badge of honor. One of the ways we share our culture and promote our pride of place is by telling our state's story—stories about our charming towns, our wild and majestic natural surroundings, and our creative and resilient people.

I really enjoyed learning about award-winning author Glenn Taylor in "A Dedication To Place" on page 8. His book, *The Ballad of Trenchmouth Taggart*, was a 2008 National Book Critics Circle Award finalist, and is a must-read. This Huntington native weaves West Virginia history and culture into his books, and I'm looking forward to reading his latest novel, *A Hanging at Cinder Bottom*.

But novelists aren't the only kind of storytellers. I used to own a store that only sold West Virginia-made products. It was a great lesson in the importance of storytelling. When shoppers were looking at items like handblown glass ornaments or hand-forged iron tabletop flowers or carefully crafted ceramics, they weren't making purchasing decisions based on practical needs. What drew them to a product was the story—the story of who created it, how it was made, and where it came from.

I have an affinity for our local artists and craftspeople, and I work to champion our small businesses and galleries that showcase our homegrown products. Tamarack is one of our state's crown jewels. Not only does it give our artists, food producers, and craftspeople a place to sell their goods, but it introduces visitors to a more complete picture of what we have to offer in our beautiful state. And there are other wonderful spots as well. Artists at Work in Elkins, Artistry on Main in Buckhannon, Art Emporium in Charleston, Buxton & Landstreet Gallery and Studios in Thomas, and the Wheeling Artisan Center are a few that come to mind. Without places like these, it would be hard for our artists to support themselves through their crafts.

As I read Hanna Wheeler Galinat's article "In Deft Hands" on page 20, I was reminded that while writers and artists keep our heritage alive, they are also an important contributor to our economy. I've served on the Tamarack Foundation board for several years. The Tamarack system alone—through the retail facility and the foundation—has an economic impact of nearly $20 million a year. The next time you catch yourself heading to a big box convenience store, ask yourself if there's a West Virginia-made option, and choose that instead. When you do, you buy more than just a product.

Storytelling connects people. Whether it takes the form of a photograph, a hand-woven basket, a novel, a marketing campaign, or articles in a magazine, stories shape us, change us, and define us. Harold Goddard said, "The destiny of the world is determined less by the battles that are lost and won than by the stories it loves and believes in."

Make 2016 the year to surround yourself with beautiful stories,

Nikki

NIKKI BOWMAN, Editor
wonderfulwv@newsouthmediainc.com

Follow me on:
Instagram: theWVeditor

Hanna Wheeler Galinat grew up in Independence where she learned to snap beans, swing on grape vines, butcher chickens, drive a stick shift on back roads, and other essentials. She has degrees in English and writing from Oberlin College and in elementary education from Antioch University New England.

Mikenna Pierotti moved to West Virginia in 2010 from upstate New York to complete her master's degree in English, live in the mountains, and write. She loves digging around in the history, landscape, and culture of West Virginia, looking for those shiny gems that become great stories. She lives in Morgantown with her husband, Adam, her wiener dog, Tally, and far, far too many houseplants.

Shay Maunz is a writer and reporter who lives, works, knits, and bikes in Charleston. Since she joined New South Media in early 2014, she's spent most of her time thinking, talking, and writing about West Virginia—which is a great way to spend time, in her opinion. Shay is a product of North Central West Virginia.

NOVEMBER READING

What a splendid issue you have put out for November! Every article so interesting, well written, and timely. Thank you so very much. I loved every word.

FRANCES LAYTON
LEWISBURG, via email

UP RIVER WITHOUT A MAP

On page 19 of your August issue, the article states that Mill Creek is in Parkersburg. Having grown up there, that did not ring a bell with me. ... You could say that Mill Creek is in Cottageville, or Ripley's Landing, or even Ripley if you were referencing upstream. But not Parkersburg.

MIKE MARTIN
ALEXANDRIA, VA, via email

Editor's Response
You're so right, Mike! Thanks for bringing this to our attention. We apologize for the error.

Write to us! We would love to hear from you. Send your comments to 709 Beechurst Avenue, Suite 14A, Morgantown, WV 26505 or email us at *wonderfulwv@newsouthmediainc.com.*

WEST VIRGINIA BOOKSHELF

CAMPBELL'S CREEK: A PORTRAIT OF A COAL MINING COMMUNITY
by Todd Hanson

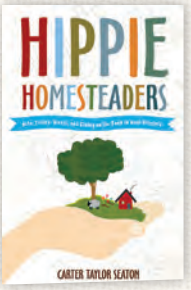
$25.95, 8.5x11, 309 pages, paperback

This book offers a glimpse into the past—a documentation of the people, places, and activities of days gone by in Campbell's Creek, a town that gave much of its energy to the industrial development of the Kanawha Valley and West Virginia. This special reprint edition combines the original book published in 1989 with an additional 136-page section featuring more than 200 new photographs, maps, charts, and illustrations.

A HANGING AT CINDER BOTTOM
by Glenn Taylor

$15.95, 5x8, 400 pages, paperback

The year is 1910. Keystone, West Virginia, is the region's biggest boomtown, and on a rainy Sunday morning in August, its townspeople are gathered in a red-light district known as Cinder Bottom to witness the first public hanging in over a decade. Abe Baach and Goldie Toothman are at the gallows. He's Keystone's most famous poker player; she's the madam of its most infamous brothel. Abe split town seven years prior under suspicion of armed robbery and murder, and has been playing cards up and down the coast. But when he returns to Keystone to reunite with Goldie and to set the past right, the real swindle begins.



HIPPIE HOMESTEADERS: ARTS, CRAFTS, MUSIC AND LIVING ON THE LAND IN WEST VIRGINIA
by Carter Taylor Seaton

$22.99, 6x9, 240 pages, paperback

It's the 1960s. The Vietnam War is raging and protests are erupting across the United States. In many quarters, young people are dropping out of society, leaving their urban homes behind in an attempt to find a safe place to live on their own terms, to grow their own food, and to avoid a war they passionately decry. During this time, West Virginia becomes a haven for thousands of these homesteaders—or back-to-the-landers, as they are termed by some. Others call them hippies.

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A DEDICATION TO PLACE

Award-winning author Glenn Taylor creates characters and places to honor, entertain, and hold a mirror to the history of his home state.

WRITTEN BY **KATIE GRIFFITH**

It started with a name, a larger-than-life character, and a bevy of settings. Later it continued through a war and its consequences on a young life. More recently it's glanced past Keystone, West Virginia, a McDowell County boomtown that today looks a far cry from the diverse, bustling city it once was. Author Glenn Taylor's career has flourished from a deep understanding of the history of his home state—from the birth of its industry and labor relations, through the patriotism that sent its children to war, and on to the bust that follows a boom—but his writing comes from the purely modern perspective of saving memory. With simple, yet lyrical prose, he's crafted stories that have introduced readers across the world to the mythos and the truth, both large and small, that create the atmosphere of West Virginia—the one place he feels he knows well enough to write about.

Taylor is one of West Virginia's most widely recognized authors today. *The Ballad of Trenchmouth Taggart*, a 2008 National Book Critics Circle Award finalist, launched his career with an epic tale of the oldest living man in West Virginia, who, with Forrest Gumpian luck, finds himself in the thick of 20th century West Virginian and American history. Next came *The Marrowbone Marble Company*, which tells the story of a young man off to World War II and the consequences of coming home to Huntington, his old job at the glass factory, and the struggles of race and class after the war. Most recently, *A Hanging at Cinder Bottom*, which starts with a dual hanging in a rough and wild coal town and quickly rewinds to a tale of long-con scams and romance, has been hailed by the *New York Times* as "can't-quit-you" reading.

Taylor's writing deftly pulls together the fantastical of West Virginia—the tall tales and taller personalities that adorn this state's history—and the quick, practical realism that long has defined its scrappy farmers, miners, loggers, wives, and children. But his inspiration comes not from the hills that writers and songwriters wax so eloquent about. He's not from the riverbeds where generations remember with fond lucidity the joys of casting a hook and feeling the quick tug of a catch. He's not from coalfields where a streak of soot across the face is worn as a badge of honor.

As much as West Virginia can claim one, Taylor is a city boy. The Huntington native who remembers clearly weekend afternoons spent at bat mitzvahs, the joys of Lebanese cuisine, and the convenience of ornate theaters just a bike ride away. "I didn't notice the landscape or anything like that growing up," he says, though he spent summers and weekends with his grandparents in Matewan and afternoons running around the hills outside Huntington. Like many children before him, Taylor had to leave West Virginia to find his appreciation: "I took it for granted and—you've heard this tale before—once I left at 18, the longer I was away, and the farther away I lived, it gave me a nostalgia and appreciation, a longing for where I was from."

The longing hit him in Texas, a landscape as unlike West Virginia as any you might find. "When I was in Austin, in grad school, I didn't really know my subject matter," he says. "I was just kind of writing wandering-young-man short stories like a lot of us do in grad school when you're learning to be a writer. But on

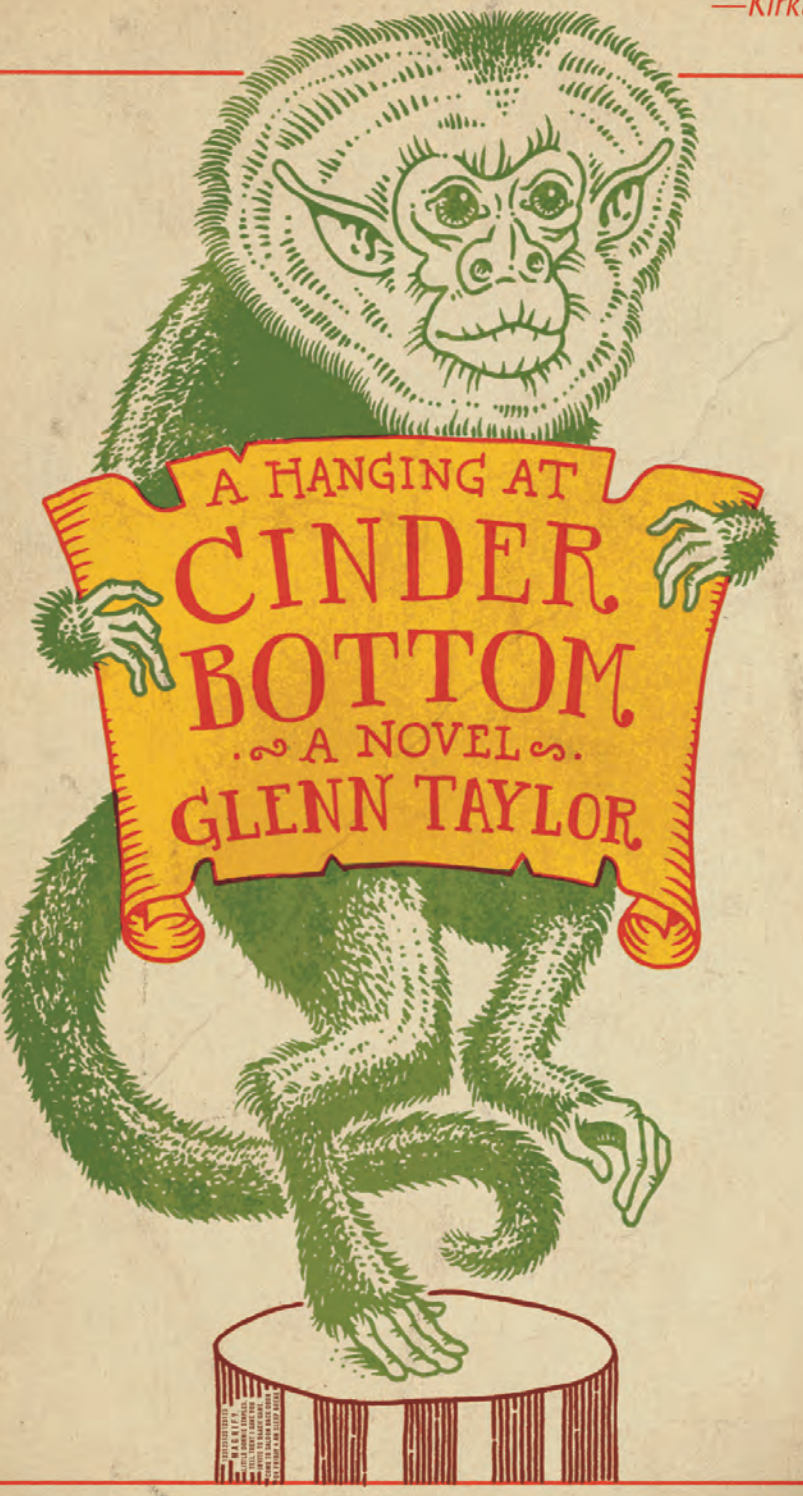
COURTESY OF GLENN TAYLOR

Award-winning author Glenn Taylor has published three novels about the Mountain State and its people.

"Like Portis's *True Grit*, an American fable told with literary nuance."

—*Kirkus*

J



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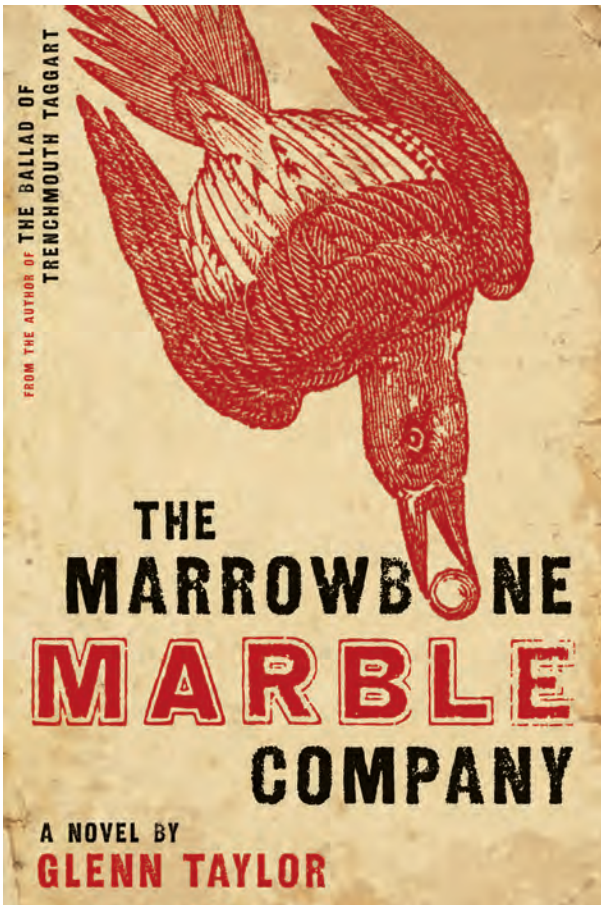
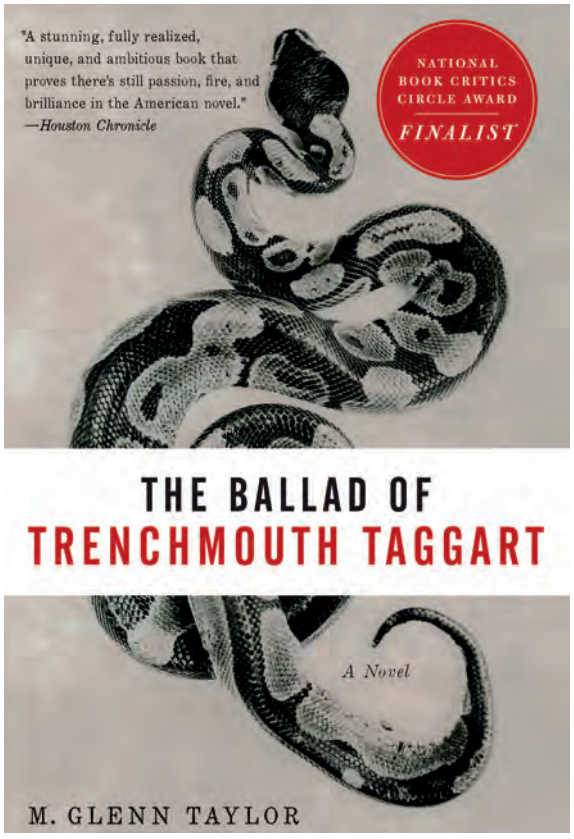
visits home at Christmas and in the summers I started getting interested in West Virginia history, and I started stealing these books from my dad like *Thunder in the Mountains* by Lon Savage, *The Battle of Blair Mountain* by Robert Shogan. I started reading them, and they started swirling in my mind." Those swirls soon became the basis of *Trenchmouth*. And, a few years later, a similar process focused on glassmaking in West Virginia opened his mind to *Marrowbone*. "I'm always writing to be accurate in terms of the way things were," he says. "If I'm writing about a glass factory making marbles, I'm going to do my research so the people in glassmaking will say 'Oh, he did his research.' I want to make sure they don't say, 'Oh, this kid doesn't know what he's talking about.'"

While Taylor says his main goal is to create engaging literature, he's also mindful that his stories, as widely sold as they are, are helping to shape the understanding of West Virginians, not just in-state, but around the country and the world. France loves T*renchmouth*. So does Germany. "I try to make sure my audience knows that West Virginia is not a purely rural place with a purely homogenous people," he says. "I think my latest novel shows folks that West Virginia is not just one thing, and that you can look at statistics about race or religion and, because of all the state's rural areas, have a skewed perspective."

Taylor, now an English professor at West Virginia University, recently returned from a trip to Nashville to the Southern Festival of Books, where he had the opportunity to discuss perspectives on place and people with other notable Appalachian and southern writers. "I'm teaching a class right now called 'Place is All You Have,' which is a quote from Mississippi writer Larry Brown. He always got asked 'What is it about Oxford, Mississippi, that produces so many great writers?' And he said, 'It isn't anything. You take what you've got and you make your fiction from it, because place is all you have.'"

Whether place means landscape, or people, or a mixture of both, Taylor understands what place and home give to a writer and how much they inspire his words. It's why he has dedicated a career to giving back. His gift is genuine, truthful, and poetic storytelling. "I'm always worried that the people in McDowell County, for instance, will think that this is somehow disrespectful to them because the stories are so wild and focus on the boom times in a way that doesn't romanticize them. It shows pretty wacky, rough stuff." Instead the opposite has happened, he says. In one case, a library in McDowell requested a number of copies of *Cinder Bottom*. "I sent them, I didn't hear anything, and finally I did email the librarian and was like, 'What's the word?' And she said people loved them. They were requesting them in Welch and beyond. I find readers in this state are so generous and kind about the books. This is not some sensationalistic portrayal. It's to honor what went on and what built this country—in large part the mines and the railroad."





COURTESY OF GLENN TAYLOR; COURTESY OF ECCO/HARPERCOLLINS

Gallery

Red fox in the snow photographed by Steve Shaluta Photography
steveshaluta.com

Snowy white-tailed doe photographed by BK Photography
facebook.com/photographybybk

Preston County blue jay in early spring photographed by Kathy Jenkins

Squirrel photographed by Kevin Jack Photography
kevinjackphotography.com

"A WINTER GARDEN IN AN ALDER SWAMP

WHERE CONIES NOW COME OUT TO SUN AND ROMP,

AS NEAR A PARADISE AS IT CAN BE

AND NOT MELT SNOW OR START A DORMANT TREE."

A Winter Eden, **ROBERT FROST**

DEFYING WINTER

These plants don't just survive West Virginia's harshest winter weather, they thrive in it.

WRITTEN BY **MIKENNA PIEROTTI**

LIZ WEST

Imagine you are rooted to the earth, and winter is coming. The ground beneath you grows cold, even under a blanket of leaves and moss. One morning, ice forms jagged crystals on your skin. The sun disappears behind gray clouds. Snow falls. It covers you, but you can't move. How do you survive? "Animals have ways of making it through winter," says George Longenecker, executive director of the West Virginia Botanic Garden in Morgantown and professor emeritus of landscape architecture at West Virginia University. Animals move, they hibernate, or they migrate. "Plants don't do those things."

In West Virginia, average winter temperatures range from 46 degrees Fahrenheit in December to 26 degrees Fahrenheit in January. In the upper elevations, places like Spruce Knob in Pendleton County and Dolly Sods Wilderness Area in the Monongahela National Forest, temperatures can dip to 20 below zero. At that point, the water in the ground starts to freeze and becomes unusable. Photosynthesis becomes difficult, if not impossible. For many green, growing life forms in these areas, winter is the end of the line.

Come January, the brush strokes of fall color on the hills have faded away, and the grasses have all dried up—some so stiff a breeze would snap them in half. The world seems fragile, if not dead. But Longenecker says it's anything but. "Some plants are what's called 'cold hardy.' In this case, that's the ability to tolerate freezing temperatures. Different plants do that in different ways," he says.

Herbaceous perennials, or those without woody stems, die back, all the way to the ground. But the parts of the plant in the ground remain alive. "The top will freeze and—even those plants that are tender, like the chrysanthemums in your garden—if they are allowed to collect leaves around their crowns, it acts as insulation. Those plants will often come back." Other plants have needles or leaves with a waxy coating that resists freezing and drying. Still others, like the cereal grain rye, actually produce an antifreeze-like protein that protects them.

A walk through the woods at the apex of winter will reveal many such survivors, from deciduous trees like oaks and maples that shed their leaves in a rain of color every fall to conserve water, to the familiar evergreens. Standing out in swaths of dark green, they are the white cedars, red and white pines, and twisted juniper. They fight winter with needle-like or scaly leaves. Same goes for the rhododendrons and mountain laurel, two of the more common species you'll find in West Virginia forests, Longenecker says. Their leaves are thick and leathery, trapping moisture inside and locking out frost.

These are all winter survivors. But what about winter defiers? Some plants have evolved not only to make it through the coldest weather but to thrive in it. Some produce flowers so late you'll find them blooming under a blanket of snow, and some sprout berries so hardy they cling for months, providing food for birds and other animals even in the bleak days of late winter and early spring. "These plants fulfill different niches in the environment. From the standpoint of distribution of offspring and seeds, there are lots of ways plants have evolved to do that in every season. But in winter, you can't help but look around at them in wonder," Longenecker says.

Take a walk in the winter wilderness this year, and you'll discover that some of the most beautiful flora in West Virginia only don their best attire in the harshest months.

Many plants can survive West Virginia's winters with sharp or leathery leaves that conserve water and protect against frost. Some even produce special proteins that protect their cells from freezing.

NANNETTE TURNER

American Holly (*Ilex opaca*)

This symbol of wintry holiday festivity, the wood of which was once used to make whip handles, doesn't tolerate the coldest of winters. American holly is more commonly found in the Southeast but is moving north where temperatures are often colder, and the Appalachian Mountains currently make up the northernmost edge of its range.

You'll find this slow-growing understory tree in both swampy and dry soils. It can grow to more more than 30 feet tall and has distinct, shiny evergreen leaves that curve into points along the edges. It flowers May to June with clusters of white blossoms, which produce green berries that turn red in October and stay on the plant for months, providing late winter forage for some animals. "When migratory animals like robins come back in spring, and we have a good snow on the ground, they'll eat the holly berries to stay alive."

FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS BOBISTRAVELING

Eastern Mistletoe (*Phoradendron leucarpum*)
Another icon of holiday parties—and surprise kisses—bright green mistletoe is easy to spot with its white berries and smooth evergreen leaves hanging among bare branches in winter. Few know the plant is actually a parasite. "It sends its roots into the tree and it gets some of its sustenance that way, though it can also carry on photosynthesis," Longenecker says. "It's not normally devastating to the tree."

Many people today hang fake plastic mistletoe over doorways to steal kisses during the holidays, but in the wild, the plant is a keystone species. It provides food and shelter for birds and, in turn, those hungry animals spread its seed.

"Birds will eat the mistletoe berries, digest them, and spread the seeds through excrement or, because the berries are very sticky, some will attach to the birds' beaks. The birds will try to rub them off on the bark of a tree and those berries will get stuck to the tree," Longenecker says.

Once stuck, a mistletoe seed hardens, sprouts, and slowly digs its root into a host plant's vascular system. From there the two become nearly inseparable.

Mistletoe is actually a parasite that loves elm and hackberry trees. It's easy to spot among bare branches.

Witch hazel often flowers so late in fall that its blossoms end up covered in snow. It's a common companion of wintergreen.

A Winter Garden

You don't have to travel far to find winter color if you have space in your garden beds. Add *Jasminum nudiflorum*, or winter jasmine, a shrub with long, slender branches bearing yellow or white six-petaled flowers from November to March. A native of China, it's cultivated around the world in full sun to partial shade. Urban gardeners might try snowdrops, or *Galanthus nivalis*, one of the first blooms to appear in February. These seemingly fragile plants appear on short green stems, which often break through snow and ice to bear white, gracefully down-turned flowers. Snowdrops spread—one reason they've become naturalized outside their native Europe. Keep them contained and in part shade. Anyone can plant a Christmas rose, *Helleborus niger*, if you have a shady spot under a deciduous tree. It will produce white or pink-tinged flowers with lime green centers among evergreen leaves in early January. Like many winter flora, it has a few legends attached. One tells of a young girl in Bethlehem who, finding herself without a gift for the newly born Christ, cried tears that turned into flowers.

Snowdrops

Christmas rose

JASON HOLLINGER; TEJVAN PETTINGER; TAKASHI M

American Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)
Although some lookalikes may be found in the state, like the spotted wintergreen, American wintergreen, also known as eastern teaberry, is the only fruiting understory shrub in West Virginia with the distinct, refreshing flavor mimicked in candies, gums, and toothpastes around the world.

Growing no more than six inches tall, wintergreen creeps across the forest floor with shiny oval leaves that, when rubbed, give off the telltale wintergreen smell. Its leaves, like its berries, are edible and were often used by Native Americans and early European colonists to make tea. The plant does contain an aspirin-like compound, Longenecker warns, and can cause allergic reactions in those sensitive to salicylic acid.

Wintergreen flowers from July to August with drooping, bell-shaped white blossoms, and its berries ripen from October to December. If you're looking to find your own patch, head to groves of maple, oak, or poplar. Wintergreen likes to grow beneath cover.

Or seek out one of wintergreen's common companions, another late fall- and early winter-thriving tree with medicinal properties, *Hamamelis virginiana* commonly known as witch hazel. Its golden, spidery flowers bloom so late in fall you'll often find them—like the rest of the state—buried under snow, hoping for spring thaw.

You might smell wintergreen before you notice it underfoot. This winter plant's edible leaves and berries give off a refreshing scent.

FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS BOBISTRAVELING

CARLA WITT FORD

IN DEFT HANDS

West Virginia's long tradition of handiwork continues through the modern era.

WRITTEN BY **HANNA WHEELER GALINAT**

Brenda Harman, a broom maker, and Woody Harman, a blacksmith, craft their creations together at home in Pocahontas County.

COURTESY OF BRENDA HARMAN, DREW TANNER, GWEN BALOGH

West Virginia's rugged hills demanded that people living among them create their own implements to make life easier. Pioneers tied tassels to sticks to sweep the hearth. A winter's project was hand-planing wood into the rails of a chair to pass long evenings by the fire. And almost every hamlet had someone to perform the alchemy of turning fire, water, and iron into hayforks. Today, these crafts live on in the hands of West Virginia's artisans. Some craft as a hobby, some teach beginners, and some make their livings selling their work, but they all find inspiration within the landscape.

BrenWood Forge & Brooms

Brenda and Woody Harman fit together like the plaits of Brenda's hand-tied brooms. They own BrenWood Forge & Brooms in Pocahontas County, an ironworks and broom shop, which is an amalgamation of their names and talents. They play together, riding horses or enjoying the view from their deck, and they work together from home—Brenda in the basement by the fire and Woody out in the forge, where he crafts tools to help Brenda create her brooms. Likewise, Brenda makes brooms to include in Woody's fireplace tool sets.

Woody is a self-taught blacksmith and makes everything from hand tools to decorative scrollwork. "I taught myself, so I'm not limited by anything," he says. His coal-burning forge is based on a design from the 1800s, though he uses modern equipment. He has a portable forge with a hand-crank blower for classes, such as the ones he teaches at the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins. He salvages some materials and buys some from Beckley Steel. Brenda refers to their backyard collection of rusting hay rakes as "the junk pile," while Woody calls it his "treasures."

When Woody gives demonstrations, people approach him excited to learn the uses for tools left by their great-grandfathers in barns long ago. "They like to see a working blacksmith," he says. "It was such an important part of our culture." That curiosity about blacksmithing is leading to its resurrection. Woody sees more and more new faces at his classes and at smithing conventions called "hammer-ins" where blacksmiths trade ideas and new smiths learn techniques. "People are taking pride in things they can make themselves," he says.

Brenda's training is a bit more formal. She attended the John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina

Anne Beardslee's hand-coiled baskets are made from pine needles and other natural materials like shells.

COURTESY OF ANNE BEARDSLEE

and makes brooms the old-fashioned way: using broom corn and tying each piece with twine rather than with wire. Thanks to Woody, she uses homemade needles to make a tight stitch, helping her brooms last. "I'm probably one of the only broom makers with titanium needles," she jokes. Brenda works around the clock filling Internet sales, creating custom orders, and keeping galleries stocked—her brooms have sold in 40 states and five countries.

She and Woody are both members of the Pocahontas County Artisan Co-op and they help run the 4th Avenue Gallery in Marlinton. Between the busy hours and during downtime, the couple rides horses to scout for broom handles in the forest, looking particularly for branches with unusual scars or spiral effects from vines. Brenda keeps these in her "handle hutch," where she sorts them by type of wood and curing time.

Like Woody, Brenda enthusiastically engages audiences when demonstrating her craft. She teaches the history of broom corn and broom folklore. "Tourists soak that information up," she says. "They want their kids to know about heritage crafts."

BrenWood Forge & Brooms, Hillsboro, 304.653.8550, forgeandbroom.com

Pine Needle Baskets

Anne Beardslee is inspired by the shapes she sees when hiking in the hills. "It could be tree burls or a mushroom that has a different top," she says. The pine needle baskets she coils by hand reflect those flowing shapes she finds in nature. Beardslee even collects walnuts on her property, slices them into rounds, and works them into her baskets. "The texture reminds me of the forest," she says.

She uses longleaf pine needles, which are the longest of any southern pine. Beardslee boils them in the morning and makes her baskets in the evening after the needles are cool but still wet, sewing the coils together with a strong and rot-resistant linen. Between crafting, she works at the Artists at Work Gallery in Elkins and at West Virginia Mountain Highlands, a nonprofit promoting tourism in the Potomac Highland region. Beardslee's expertise developed over years of practice and today the artist makes enough baskets to supply several gallaries.

Southern Native American tribes developed pine needle basketry thousands of years ago, and when she saw a friend's example, Beardslee was fascinated. She studied the basket's shape and tried making her own. The process to complete her first, tiny piece took nine discouraging hours, but she tried again, developed her technique, and never looked back. Today Beardslee respects the history of her craft, though she worries about its future. "Basket-making is tens of thousands of years old," she says. "The problem is there are almost no young people doing this. It really has become a lost art."

Anne Beardslee, Elkins, 304.591.4311, artistsatwork.us

Tom Doak's chairs are displayed at the Augusta Heritage Festival. "The shows are the interesting part because you meet a lot of nice people," he says. Known as the ATTA-Way Rocker, the design dates back to the 1800s.

ATTA-Way Rockers

Tom Doak's rocking chairs are beautiful, functional, and steeped in history. Their unique lattice pattern is a Doddridge County design dating back to the 1800s, when a farmer named Ronald James made chairs in the winter. James's daughter gave a chair to her nephew, Doak's father, who used it as a template to make more chairs, which he sold to neighbors. When his father passed away, Doak filled the leftover chair orders himself.

At the time, Doak was teaching high school. He wondered if the economics lessons he taught in class really worked, so he started a chair-making business. Almost 30 years later and with Doak retired from teaching, his business is still going strong. "I guess it worked," he laughs. His success has made the chair well known as the ATTA-Way rocker, a name that comes from the first initials of his family members: Anna, Tom, Tricia, and Anessa.

Doak uses mostly West Virginia hardwoods, including oak, walnut, maple, and cherry. He customizes his chairs with different wood combinations and fits them to a customer's height. When he's not in the shop, he's on the road. He travels to the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair, Augusta Festival Craft Fair, Pipestem Resort State Park Gift Show, and others. Tamarack and multiple state parks display the ATTA-Way chairs so visitors can rock and relax with a piece of West Virginia heritage.

Doak makes the chairs in his home workshop in West Union, where his wife and niece also help with the business. Since he started, he has made 4,888 chairs as well as porch swings and tables, all with the signature lattice. So many chairs later, he says, "It's enjoyable to make them. I'm shooting for 5,000."

ATTA-Way Rockers, West Union, 304.873.1852, attawayrockers.biz

CARLA WITT FORD

Appalachian Glass

Chip Turner of Appalachian Glass has a scientist's knowledge, a tycoon's business skills, and an artist's sensibilities. But he rejects those labels in favor of his trade's name. "Be proud of what you do. Call yourself what you are," the glassmaker says.

Glassmaking is one of America's oldest industries and an important part of West Virginia's heritage. Like other heritage professions such as blacksmithing and carpentry, hand-blown glassmaking involves handiwork and creativity. Turner learned glassmaking "from the ground up." In high school, he took a glassblowing course and, after graduation, worked for several glass houses—starting in the maintenance department and working up to a facility manager position. "When you work with something every day, you absorb a lot," he says. By 2001, he had enough experience to open his own company: Appalachian Glass in Weston.

Operating a true family business, Turner, his father, and his son manufacture glass six days a week. Turner's glass sells in 38 states and 20 state parks, and he travels to multiple fairs with his portable furnace. Nearly 65 tour buses a year stop at Appalachian Glass, which he calls "a cross between a glass gallery and a country store."

What inspires Turner is colors. He'll photograph autumn leaves or spring wildflowers, zooming in so that a seemingly plain white flower reveals rich reds and yellows. Turner references these photos when designing new glasswork. "No one can arrange colors better than nature," he says.

Appalachian Glass, Weston, 304.269.1030, shopwva.com

Chip Turner, the proprietor of Appalachian Glass, blows glass six days a week with his family and hosts more than 65 tour buses a year. "In glassmaking, you're either full bore or you're not doing it," he says.

CARLA WITT FORD

CARLA WITT FORD

A Wintry Walk

Tired of staying cooped up all winter? Strap on a pair of snowshoes and explore the terrain around you.

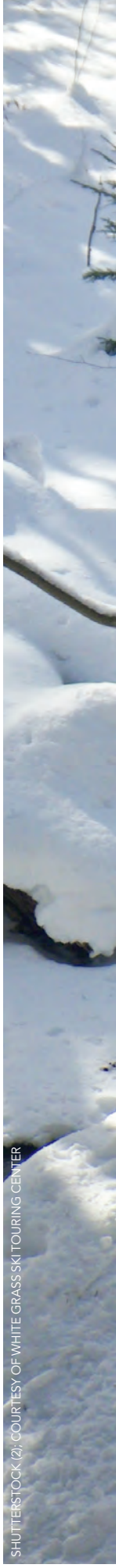
WRITTEN BY **SHAY MAUNZ**

When people talk about snowshoeing, they tend to do it in almost poetic terms. It's all about the hush of a forest cloaked in snow, the whisper of wind through the trees, the calming effect of a landscape covered in white. The most casual conversation quickly evolves into a meditation on a mental state that can only be achieved walking alone through a snowy forest. "Winter is magic," says Chip Chase, owner of the White Grass Ski Touring Center in Davis, during one such conversation. "It's ethereal. It doesn't last long, it's here today and—poof—it's gone tomorrow. If you can get out there on snowshoes in the first moments after the snow, it's something really special." Mary Willis, who owns the Elk River Touring Center in Slaty Fork with her husband Gil, is just as smitten. "The farther out you get the quieter it gets," she says. "The snow blankets the underbrush and everything becomes quieter and more magical. You know how snow is—it's pretty enticing."

Animals developed a body feature akin to snowshoes millennia ago. The snowshoe hare, for example, has feet that are almost comically big compared to the rest of its body, with a large surface area that keeps the animal from sinking into drifts. Without those wide feet, the hare wouldn't be able to move through the powdery terrain during North American winters. Humans developed their own version between 4,000 and 6,000 years ago for much the same reason: The most efficient way to travel in a thick sea of snow is by moving over it, not through. Old-fashioned snowshoes consisted of big hardwood frames and latticework made from rawhide, and they were used for just about every winter activity imaginable. Native Americans wore them to hunt and fish, fur traders wore them to visit animal traps, and farmers wore them to the barn to feed the livestock. "They're really good work tools," Chase says. "They have a lot of utilitarian purpose."

In the 1970s a more high-tech snowshoe was developed featuring lightweight metal, heavy-duty plastic, and neoprene webbing. "It changed the appearance of snowshoeing, because now you weren't wearing this big wooden thing on your feet," says Candice Bosworth, the executive director of the United States Snowshoe Association. "You were wearing something sleek and metallic with binding that didn't take an hour to put on, and you could maneuver with them better

Snowshoes, invented thousands of years ago, mimic the natural design of animals whose feet have developed to allow them to walk, hop, and run on snow. Today tourists and locals alike enjoy winter walks through the snowy landscape of places like White Grass Ski Touring Center in Canaan Valley.



SHUTTERSTOCK (2); COURTESY OF WHITE GRASS SKI TOURING CENTER

"THE SIMPLICITY OF IT MAKES YOU MORE AWARE OF WHAT'S AROUND YOU."

CHIP CHASE

because they were smaller. It modernized the concept of snowshoeing." Today, most snowshoeing is done for fun. "We've come to a point in our society where we can play more," Chase says. "We don't have to use snowshoes for work because we don't do that kind of work so much these days."

There are plenty of ways to enjoy the outdoors in West Virginia, even during the most frigid of winter days—downhill skiing and snowboarding come to mind as well as ice skating and cross-country skiing. But the advantage to snowshoeing is that it can be done anywhere.

A trail designed and maintained especially for snowshoes is nice but you don't need one. A thick layer of snow covers most of the smaller greenery anyway, so there's actually a lot less tricky maneuvering than during a warm weather hike. "It's an independent thing to do," Bosworth says. "You can go where you want, when you want, how you want—how long, how short. You can climb mountains with snowshoes on. You can walk through the woods. You can walk through the park. It's an independent, individualized activity." Plus, it's easy. The same way "hiking" is just a fancy term for walking in the woods, "snowshoeing" is just walking with something strapped on your feet. A 3-mile walk in snowshoes may feel like 5 miles, but all that aerobic activity comes in handy—with the right clothing you'll stay plenty warm.

As an antidote to long, drowsy winter days spent nestled inside, insulated from the beauty of this dynamic season we call winter, snowshoeing becomes a way to access the outdoors that we too often think of as off limits when there's a foot or more of snow on the ground. "The simplicity of it makes you more aware of what's around you," Chase says. "You notice deer and birds and terrain and things you would normally just whiz by in a recreational ski situation. You just take it all in."

WHERE TO GO:

Blackwater Falls State Park
More than 20 miles of trails are open for snowshoeing along an 8-mile gorge cut by the Blackwater River. Rentals are available.

1584 Blackwater Lodge Road, Davis, 304.259.5216
blackwaterfalls.com

Canaan Valley Resort State Park
In addition to downhill skiing slopes, some hiking trails are open to snowshoers and offer exquisite mountain views and a trek through swaths of wilderness. Rentals are available.

230 Main Lodge Road, Davis, 304.866.4121, canaanresort.com

Elk River Touring Center
Snowshoers have access to 3 miles of maintained trails bordering the Monongahela National Forest as well as another 22 miles that crisscross the Highland Scenic Highway. Beginners will find snowshoe rentals for adults and children, plus guided tours and lessons.

US-219, Slaty Fork, 304.572.3771, ertc.com

Pipestem Resort State Park
Fifteen miles of trails are open to snowshoers. Pipestem is home to beautiful scenic overlooks of the Bluestone Gorge.

3405 Pipestem Drive, Pipestem, 304.466.1800
pipestemresort.com

Timberline Four Seasons Resort
More than 9 miles of groomed trails are available for snowshoeing through the higher ranges of the Allegheny Mountains.

254 Four Seasons Drive, Davis, 304.866.4801
timberlineresort.com

Snowshoe Mountain
Twenty-five miles of cross country trails as well as rentals are available, and Snowshoe offers excellent access to the backcountry.

10 Snowshoe Drive, Snowshoe, 877.441.4386
snowshoemtn.com

White Grass Ski Touring Center
Visitors will find nearly 40 miles of trails between 3,200- and 4,400-foot elevations, plus cross country gear rentals and sales. Whitegrass picks up some 160 feet of annual snowfall, and the property covers 1,200 vertical feet.

643 Weiss Knob Ski Road, Davis, 304.866.4114, whitegrass.com

ADAM SHAY; SHUTTERSTOCK

January Events 800.CALL.WVA

wvtourism.com | wvstateparks.com/calendar.html

Blackwater Falls State Park Ice-covered falls are a majestic sight after a heavy snowfall. Blackwater Falls State Park, Davis, *blackwaterfalls.com*

COURTESY OF WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

JANUARY 1
First Day Hike
Pipestem Resort State Park
Pipestem
304.466.1800

First Day Hike
Cacapon Resort State Park
Berkeley Springs
304.258.1022, ext. 5209

First Day Hike
Blackwater Falls State Park
Davis
304.259.5216

A Tree!-mendous Hike
Bluestone State Park
Hinton
304.466.2805

Shanghai Parade
Downtown Lewisburg
304.645.1434

JANUARY 2
Little Princess Ball
North Bend State Park
Cairo
304.643.2931

JANUARY 3
12th Annual Wedding Expo
Charleston Civic Center
Charleston
304.345.1500

JANUARY 8–10
Burton Women's Snowboard Camp
Snowshoe Resort
Snowshoe
877.441.4FUN

JANUARY 9
Woody Hawley Presents Hank Williams Tribute
The Clay Center
Charleston
304.561.3570

7th Annual Frozen Sasquatch 25K/50K
Kanawha State Forest
Charleston
304.558.3500

JANUARY 15
Art & Ale Tasting
Stifel Fine Arts Center
Wheeling
304.242.7700

JANUARY 15–17
RV & Boat Show
Big Sandy Superstore Arena
Huntington
304.696.5990

Winter Wonder Weekend
North Bend State Park
Cairo
304.558.2754

WV Hunting & Fishing Show
Charleston Civic Center
Charleston
304.345.1500

JANUARY 16
Menopause the Musical
Capitol Theatre
Wheeling
304.233.4470

JANUARY 21
Jerry Seinfeld Performs
Capitol Theatre
Wheeling
304.233.4470

Ron White Performs
The Clay Center
Charleston
304.561.3570

JANUARY 22
Eric Bibb Performs
Carnegie Hall
Lewisburg
304.645.7917

JANUARY 22–24
Primitive Bushcraft Weekend Workshop
Pipestem Resort State Park
Pipestem
304.466.1800

JANUARY 28
ABBA Mania
Smoot Theatre
Parkersburg
304.422.7529

JANUARY 30
Winter Music Festival
Various Locations
Lewisburg
304.645.1000

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WONDERGRAMS

Share your photos of West Virginia with us! Send Instagram-style photos to *wonderfulwv@newsouthmediainc.com* or use the hashtag #wondergrams on Instagram.

LEFT TO RIGHT Holly in Charleston by Don Brogan; Aurora farm in Preston County by Jennifer Stone; Calhoun County road by Carolyn Mitchell; snow-covered trees in Mineral Wells by Carletta Johnston; Parkersburg cardinal by Stephanie Carpenter; frozen lake in Bridgeport by Michael Eagle; Sutton sunrise by Jessica Cox; snowy Capitol in Charleston by Philip Miles; Tucker County cross-country skier by Laura Moul; barred owl in Canaan Valley by Val Carnell; fall leaves covered in snow by Kris Hawlins in Fayette County. *Photos published at editor's discretion.*

Lewis County, West Virginia

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PHOTO: BLACKWATER FALLS STATE PARK

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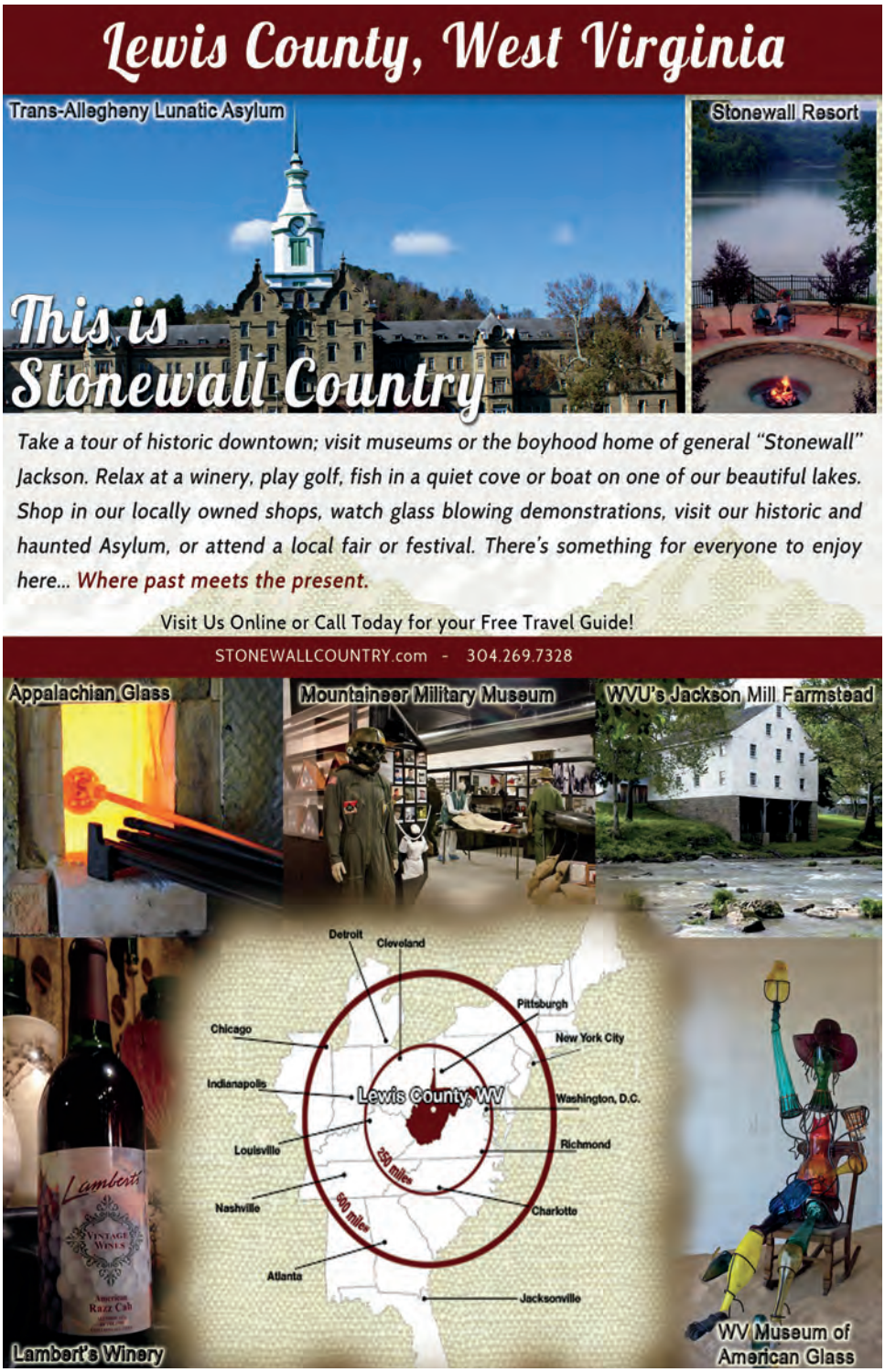

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ON THE COVER Macro photo of a snowflake photographed by Josh Shackleford *flickr.com/photos/advertisingwv/albums*

DECEMBER

VOLUME 80 NUMBER 12

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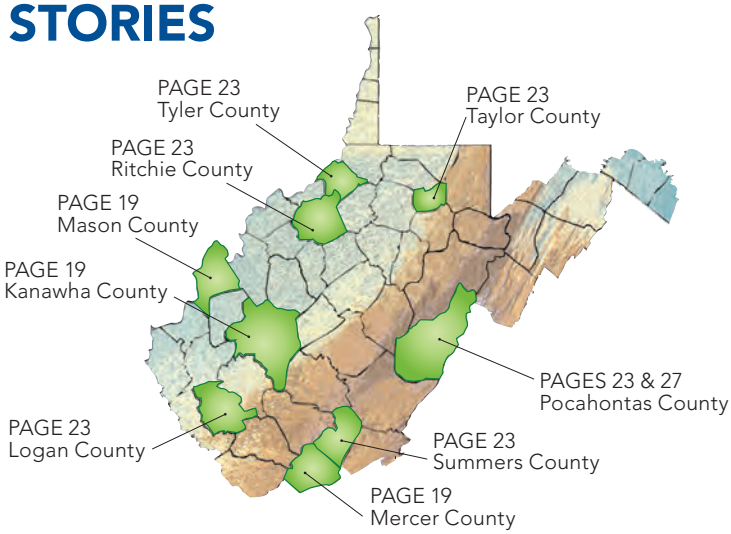

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Snowflakes on wood, photographed by Jeff Hurst Photography, *jeffhurstphotography.com*

West Virginia
Wild and Wonderful

"TWENTY YEARS FROM NOW YOU WILL BE MORE DISAPPOINTED BY THE THINGS THAT YOU DIDN'T DO THAN BY THE ONES YOU DID DO. SO THROW OFF THE BOWLINES. SAIL AWAY FROM THE SAFE HARBOR. CATCH THE TRADE WINDS IN YOUR SAILS. EXPLORE. DREAM. DISCOVER."

Mark Twain

Another year comes to a close—and what a year it has been. Looking back over all of the issues of *Wonderful West Virginia* from 2016, we've covered a lot of ground. Literally. From enlightening stories on lightning bugs and cicadas (remember those?) to stunning photography of cerulean warblers, wetlands, and waterfalls, the magazines have taken us to places we've never been and introduced us to some fascinating stories about our natural environment. We've covered trailblazers and trails being blazed. We've paid homage to our heritage with stories on our old mills and one-room schoolhouses. We've gone snowshoeing and snowmobiling (page 27). We've eaten lichen, mushrooms (page 6), and wild game, as well as food made from recipes adapted from 18th century cookbooks.

Wonderful West Virginia readers are, well, wonderfully engaged. There's not an issue that goes by that we don't hear from you. Although time does not permit us to personally respond to each letter, we hear you! Sometimes you tell us how much you love or hate the cover. Sometimes you share story ideas and photos, sometimes you correct us, and sometimes you just say "thank you." Given the amount of mail we received about one-room schoolhouses, we think that might have been your favorite photo gallery. No matter what you have to say, we appreciate hearing from you.

It has been a good year, and I'm looking forward to 2017. (Wow. Did I just type that?) Working on this magazine is a great privilege. Each time I hold a new issue in my hands, I recall the stacks of *Wonderful West Virginia* magazines on my grandmother's coffee table. As a young child, I'd play on her old Underwood typewriter and pretend that I wrote for this magazine. It is an honor to be part of its history and, as we look to 2017, we have more entertaining and engaging stories and some pretty amazing photos to share with you.

From all of us at New South Media, thank you for supporting this magazine. Hopefully we have helped make 2016 a little more WONDERFUL!

Explore. Dream. Discover.

Nikki

NIKKI BOWMAN, Editor
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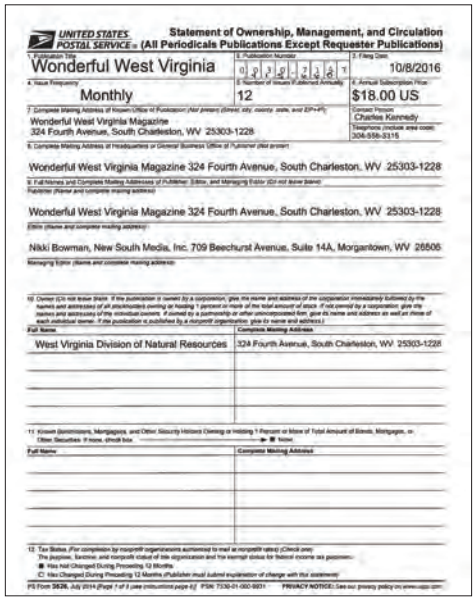
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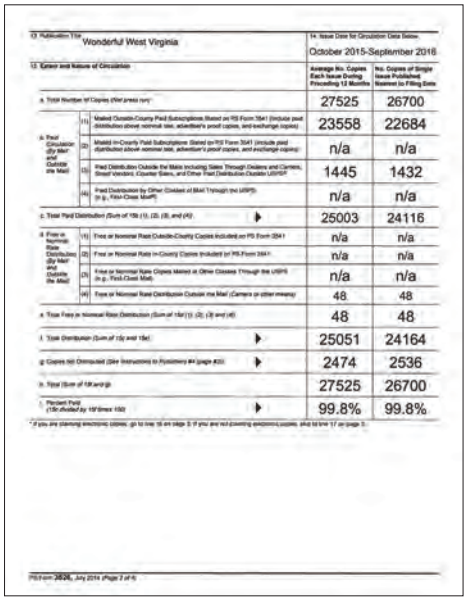
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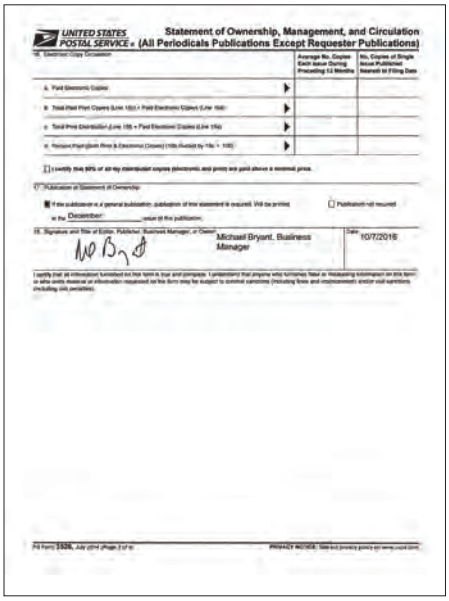
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Greetings from

GOVERNOR AND FIRST LADY TOMBLIN

As your Governor and First Lady, we would like to wish a happy holiday season and a bright new year to West Virginians across the state.

The holiday season is an especially joyous time for our family, and we're sure for many of yours. It's a time when families come together and we all take the opportunity to focus on the gift of giving and fellowship. It's also when we look forward to the new year and look back on past years.

This year, we look back on the six holiday seasons we have spent here in the Governor's Office—six Joyful Nights of reading to our state's children, six Capitol Tree Lighting ceremonies, and six holiday celebrations shared with our friends and family.

The experiences we've been so fortunate to have while serving the State of West Virginia will forever be cherished. And as this year—and our time in this office—comes to an end, we also look forward toward our great state's bright future.

To every Mountaineer near and far, we send our warmest wishes for your holiday season, and thank each of you for the greatest gift—the privilege and honor to serve as your Governor and First Lady.

Happy Holidays,

Earl Ray Tomblin Gayle Tomblin

A HOLIDAY MESSAGE
from WVDNR Director Robert Fala

In my relatively short time as your DNR director, more than 400,000 individuals have obtained their "DNR numbers." That means you and we have adapted to the new Electronic License and Game Checking System with flying colors. With certain exemptions for juniors as well as some seniors and landowners, you can see we are approaching the half-million mark for folks who hunt, fish, or both in West Virginia. Congratulations!

Although the Mountain State is a highly ranked destination for many beyond our borders, the bulk of that volume originates from our home-grown resident population of some 1.8 million Mountaineers. It could be that, when you allow for the hikers, bikers, birders, campers, and wildlife and leaf watchers, just about every one of us enjoys the great outdoors. Surely looks that way. And with service to that public in mind, we have not been resting on our laurels. Along with our many gracious conservation partners, donors, and you, the license-buying and federal excise tax-paying customers, we've been making some major progress.

For example: We have added some record 50,000 acres of Wildlife Management Area (WMA) to the state, providing not only for wildlife habitat but related tourism potential for the massive host of users out there. With many thanks to one key partner, The Conservation Fund, we added the largest single state DNR parcel in state history to provide for both our fledgling elk restoration program and other wildlife. About the time you read this, our initial elk restoration transplant "hooves on the ground" should be nigh, with much thanks to our U. S. Forest Service partners in west Kentucky. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer might have a little elk-like competition this year.

In another example, Mr. Jack L. Workman, a most generous donor, provided for the new Forks of Coal State Natural Area just south of the capital city. This 100-acre parcel is readily accessible to the public off US 119/Corridor G in Kanawha County, and also houses the new DNR District 5 headquarters at a centralized location for both our Law Enforcement and Wildlife Resources sections after many years apart. Though Mr. Workman recently passed away, he left confident that DNR would fulfill his dreams and those of his late wife Claudia with a particular slant toward the youth of Appalachia.

With Department of Commerce and Administration approval, DNR has embarked on one of the largest single statewide capital improvement eras in its history. No economic slowdown here! Although much of this work is inglorious repairs to our State Park and Wildlife Management Area water and sewer systems and cabins, fishing dams, and hatcheries, this work is critical to our long-term performance and continuing ability to serve you.

As you can see, there is no lack of outdoor excitement in Wonderful West Virginia. We forecast more of the same for 2017. And with that, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Bob Fala

Robert A. Fala, *Director*
Division of Natural Resources

Zack Harold is a southern West Virginia native. He covered education, health, and government at the *Charleston Daily Mail* before becoming the newspaper's features editor. He joined New South Media in 2015, became managing editor of *WV Living* in January 2016, and took over as managing editor of *Wonderful West Virginia* in July 2016.

Mikenna Pierotti moved to West Virginia in 2010 from upstate New York to complete her master's degree in English, live in the mountains, and write. She loves digging around in the history, landscape, and culture of West Virginia, looking for those shiny gems that become great stories. She lives in Morgantown with her husband, Adam, her wiener dog, Tally, and far, far too many houseplants.

Josh Shackleford developed a love for photography in high school. Achieving a degree in graphic design further cultivated his love for art. Recently the 31-year-old has discovered his new passion of macro photography, capturing the world's most intricate details. Josh resides in Beckley with his wife, son, and daughter. *flickr.com/advertisingwv*

Danielle Taylor is a freelance writer who covers outdoor recreation, conservation, public lands, and travel, and she's spending much of 2016 on a road trip to visit as many of America's parks as possible. To learn about her work and travels, follow her on Twitter (*twitter.com/adventureedit*) and Facebook (*facebook.com/adventureeditorial*), and visit her website (*adventureeditorial.com*).

REMEMBERING ONE-ROOM SCHOOLS

In the July issue, the Gallery section brought back many memories for me. I attended Mount Pleasant School in Monroe County in the 1930s and '40s. The school is (or was) located about three or four miles east of Alderson on Flat Mountain Road. My grandparents attended the same school. The photos, including the cover, were great. The photo on page 12 (Mission Ridge) shows the "central heating system"—a pot belly stove in the center of the room. The desks told me that some boys had barlow knives and had whittled on them.

ALFRED HOLLIDAY, Charlottesville, Virginia via mail

CORRECTION

Wonderful West Virginia Facebook fan Chuck Brabec pointed out the owl on November's cover is a Barred Owl, not an Eastern Screech Owl. Good eye!

Write to us! We would love to hear from you. Send your comments to 709 Beechurst Avenue, Suite 14A, Morgantown, WV 26505 or email us at *wonderfulwv@newsouthmediainc.com*.

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WINTER SECRETS

Experienced mushroom hunters say winters in the Mountain State offer their own bounty—if you know where to look.

WRITTEN BY **MIKENNA PIEROTTI**
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **WALT STURGEON**

The *Fomotiopis pinicola*, also known as the "red-belt conk," is usually found on coniferous stumps and logs. It is inedible.

A walk in the woods this time of year has a stark beauty. Far from the overt greens and vivid flower hues of spring and summer or the quickly fading glory of autumn colors, winter in West Virginia is understated in its charcoal grays, evergreens, dark shadows, and the crisp white of new snow. Most forest edibles won't return until spring, but for mushroom hunters, the search isn't over. "It's a bit like a treasure hunt," says Walt Sturgeon, a field mycologist with 40-plus years of experience. He's an identifier for the West Virginia Mushroom Club and program chairman and identifier for the Ohio Mushroom Society, and he says winter forays are a different sort of challenge.

"You're walking a trail in the woods, you're bundled up, and all of a sudden you see something that doesn't quite fit into the background. So you go to investigate. In winter, it's important no matter what it is, especially if you're looking for food. There are only a few things you can find that time of year. At the end of the day, you might have found some edible mushrooms."

Perhaps it's a cluster of sticky orange-capped fungi—called velvet stem—dotting the side of an old, dead elm. Or maybe it's a fringe of late fall oysters with their bright orange gills peeping out along the bark of a conifer. Whatever the find, Sturgeon says in winter it's the excitement of identifying and perhaps eating some of these often-overlooked gems that makes a chilly hike worthwhile.

But when most mushroom species are keeping well away from snow and ice this time of year, often retreating deep into the soil, what makes winter mushrooms brave enough to poke their heads up? Part of the reason is simply their structure, says Daniel Panaccione, Davis-Michael Professor of Plant and Soil Sciences at West Virginia University. "The mushroom is only a small part of the fungus itself. The rest is imbedded in the tree or soil as a microscopic web of hyphae, the vegetative body that penetrates through wood and other substance to gather nutrients. Periodically the fungus will put out a fruiting body to reproduce by spreading its spores around," he says.

Panaccione calls some of the species with fruiting bodies that survive into winter "perennials." "They are actually there all year 'round. But in winter, with the leaves off the trees, that's when you're more likely to spot them. They develop slowly over a period of years." But unlike many fungi, perennials are in it for the long haul. "Whereas most fungi will put up a mushroom that decays in a few weeks, the perennials will just put

The sticky orange caps of the *Flammulina velutipes*, commonly called the "winter mushroom" or "velvet stem," are edible when cooked. Just make sure it's not the deadly lookalike, the *Galerina autumnalis*.

OPPOSITE The tasty *Pleurotus ostreatus*, better known as the oyster mushroom, can be found on broadleaf trees.

The late fall oyster, known to mycologists as *Sarcomyxa serotina*, always fruits in cold weather and can grow up to four inches wide.

up another layer of mushroom over the old. Each year it puts out a new layer and more spores come out of that. You can almost count the rings like on a tree."

Although some of these perennial species have developed a reputation as being medicinal for humans, for the trees they inhabit, these mushrooms can be the sign of a slow but inevitable demise. Take the perennial mushroom called chaga, or *Inonotus obliquus*, most often found on birch trees. "They are pathogenic. If you see them on a tree, it's a bad sign. There's something else wrong," Panaccione says. "They can be there for years before the tree succumbs, but it typically will die. Although in most cases a tree has some other stress on it—a limb breaks or the bark is damaged down to the heartwood. The fungus moves in, because that's what it wants, the nutrients there in the heartwood. From there it takes advantage."

But not all winter mushrooms are quite so ruthless. Some are merely decomposers. "They wait for things to die, then scavenge the nutrients left over and move on. They are among the best decomposers we have in the world," Panaccione says. "Without them, bacteria would take many years to break things down. Dead trees would be left standing for generations." These scavengers help return valuable nutrients, which would otherwise be locked away inside slowly decaying organic matter, to the soil, where other plants can use them.

No matter a fungus's niche, all require a few essential ingredients to develop their fruiting bodies—what we call mushrooms. "Fungi need moisture, because a lot of their growth is just expansion—some is cell division, but a lot is just soaking up water from their environment," Panaccione says. "They also need nutrients, and fungi are experts at scavenging nutrients from the environment. In fact, they are so good at finding even the smallest quantities of nutrients, you have to go to great lengths to create an environment that isn't hospitable to some type of fungi."

Panaccione speculates that it is the warmth of the trees and decaying matter they inhabit that keeps the fungi from dying off in winter. And it may be that the winter months, with less competition from other fungi and plants, offer some species of winter mushroom a reproductive edge. "The process of going from one generation to the next is very inefficient in fungi. The mushroom produces millions of spores, but many will land in the wrong place. The fungi take the approach of flooding the world with their spores and hoping some will land in the right place at the right time and produce the next generation."

Winter Mushroom Wish List

Field mycologist Walt Sturgeon offers five examples of winter mushrooms you may be able to identify in West Virginia woods. Make sure to check your finds with an experienced mushroom expert before consuming anything, as poisonous lookalikes do exist.

Fomes fomentarius. Common names: Tinder polypore and punk.	*Flammulina velutipes.* Common names: Winter mushroom, velvet stem.	*Pleurotus ostreatus.* Common name: Oyster mushroom.	*Sarcomyxa serotina.* Common name: Late fall oyster.	*Fomitopsis pinicola.* Common names: Red-belt conk, red-belted polypore.
Inedible. Shaped like a horse's hoof and ranges in color from gray to brown to black. It is a pathogenic perennial mushroom, with fruiting bodies that can live 30 years, that invades various tree species—mostly hardwood—through broken bark and will continue to decompose the tree after it has died. Its name refers to the fact that this mushroom, when dried, is extremely flammable and makes an excellent fire starter. It was used in the ignition of Revolutionary War rifles. It was also found on the body of a 5,000-year-old man found frozen in the Italian Alps. Campers and survivalists still use it today.	Edible sticky orange caps when cooked. This mushroom is common on broadleaf tree stumps and logs, especially on dead elms. It is a Japanese delicacy in its cultivated form, called enoki or enokitake, a white-stemmed, small-capped mushroom that appears quite different from its wild sibling. In the wild, this mushroom must be properly identified by an expert mycologist before eating as it has a deadly lookalike, *Galerina autumnalis*.	Edible. Oyster-shaped, hence the name, it varies from white to gray or tan to dark brown and has a bittersweet scent. It is primarily a decomposer. During World War I it was grown in Germany for subsistence and has shown the ability to digest toxic inorganic waste. Look for this mushroom on broadleaf trees and stumps during winter thaws.	This edible late fall mushroom fruits as late as early winter in some years. It is a decomposer that almost always fruits in cold weather, often after the first frosts. Growing up to four inches wide on both coniferous and deciduous trees, its colors range from green to purple to dark brown to yellow to silvery gray or some combination of these.	Inedible. Look for this large, woody fungus on coniferous stumps and logs. It is a parasitic mushroom, though in mature forests the conk doesn't interfere with normal growth. It is considered an essential nutrient recycler. It grows up to 18 inches wide and its surface is usually black-brown near the point of attachment, with reddish brown zones outward and a narrow band of creamy white at the margin.

Gallery

Snowflakes by Josh Shackleford Photography

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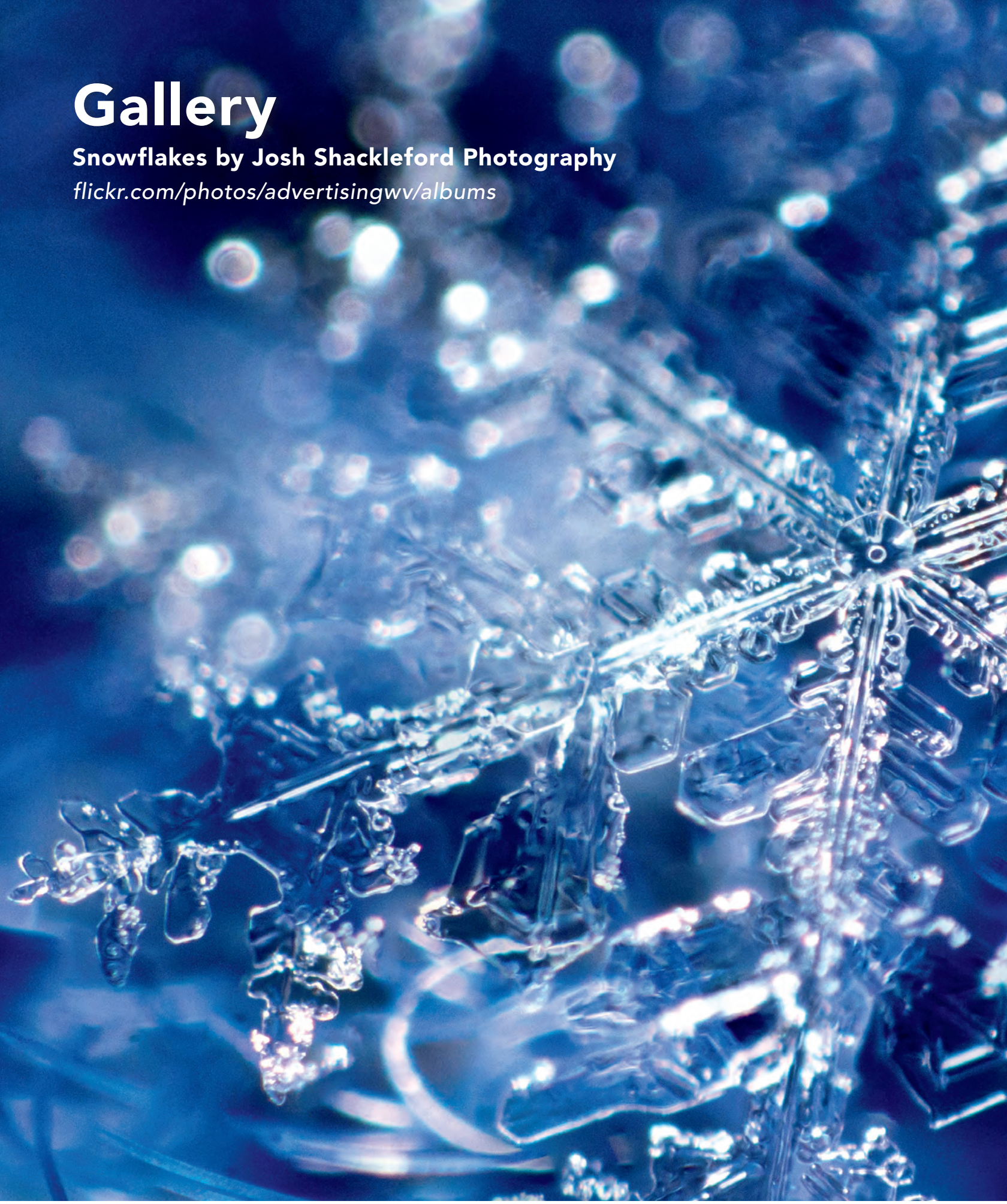
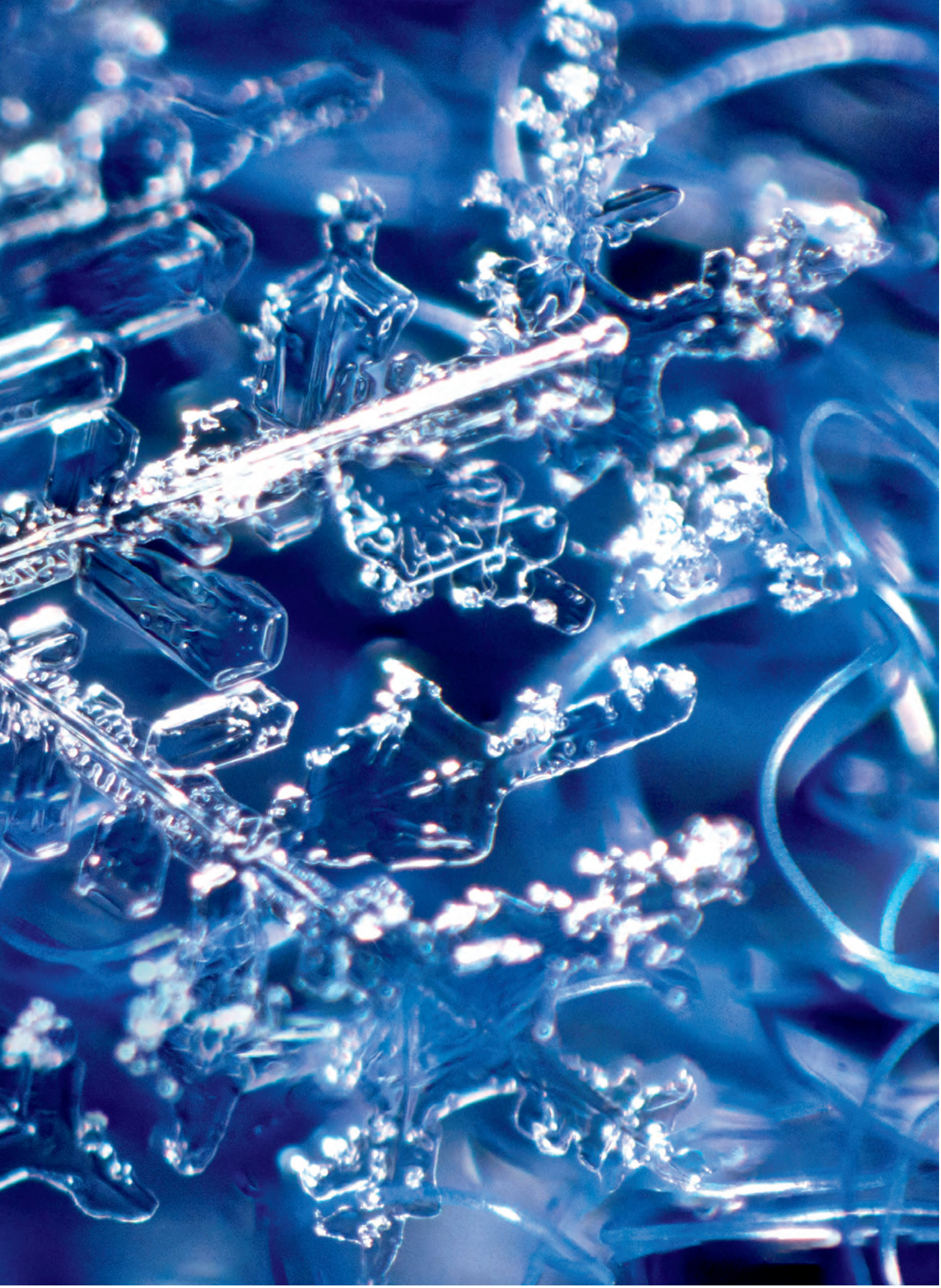
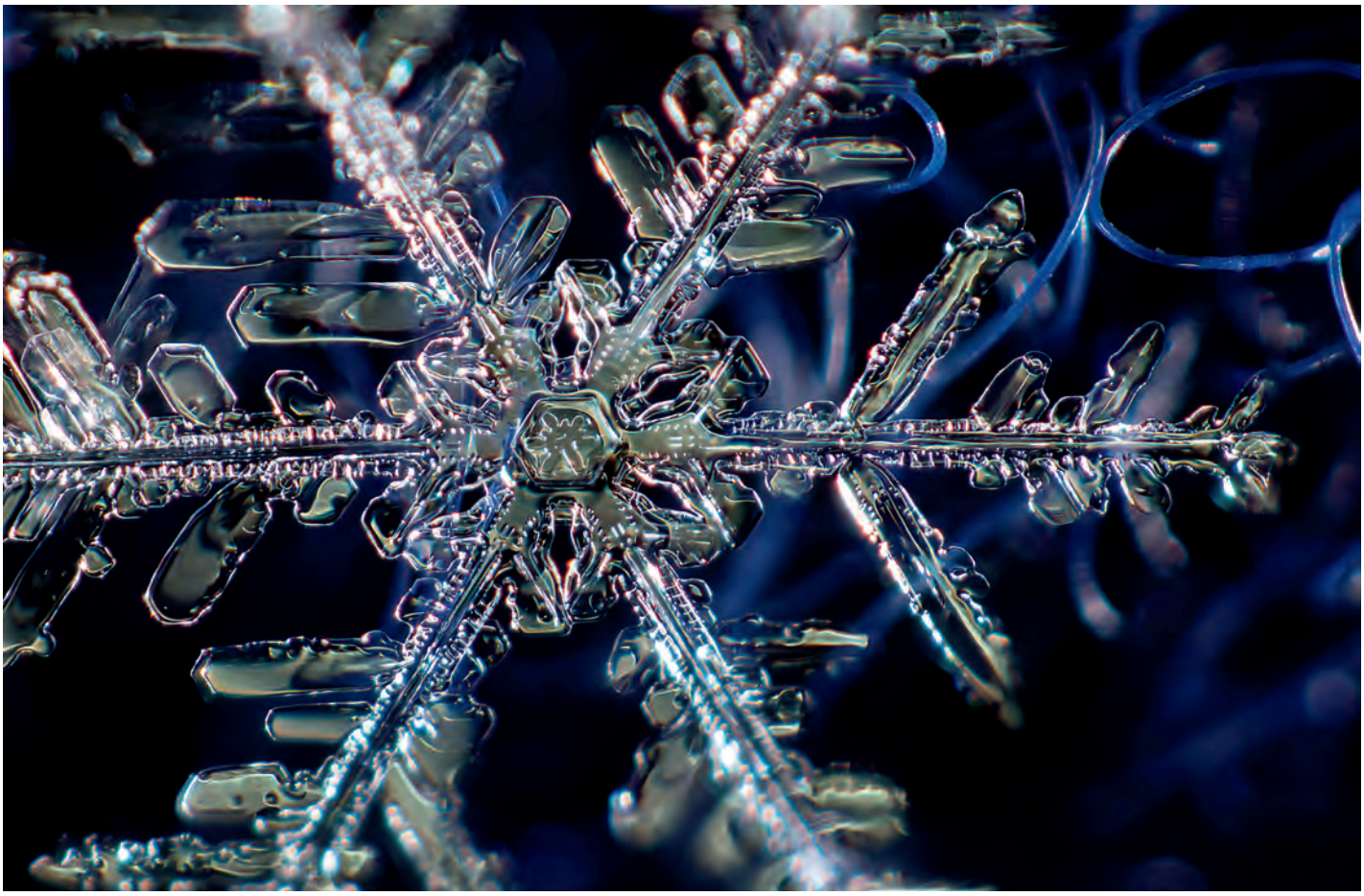
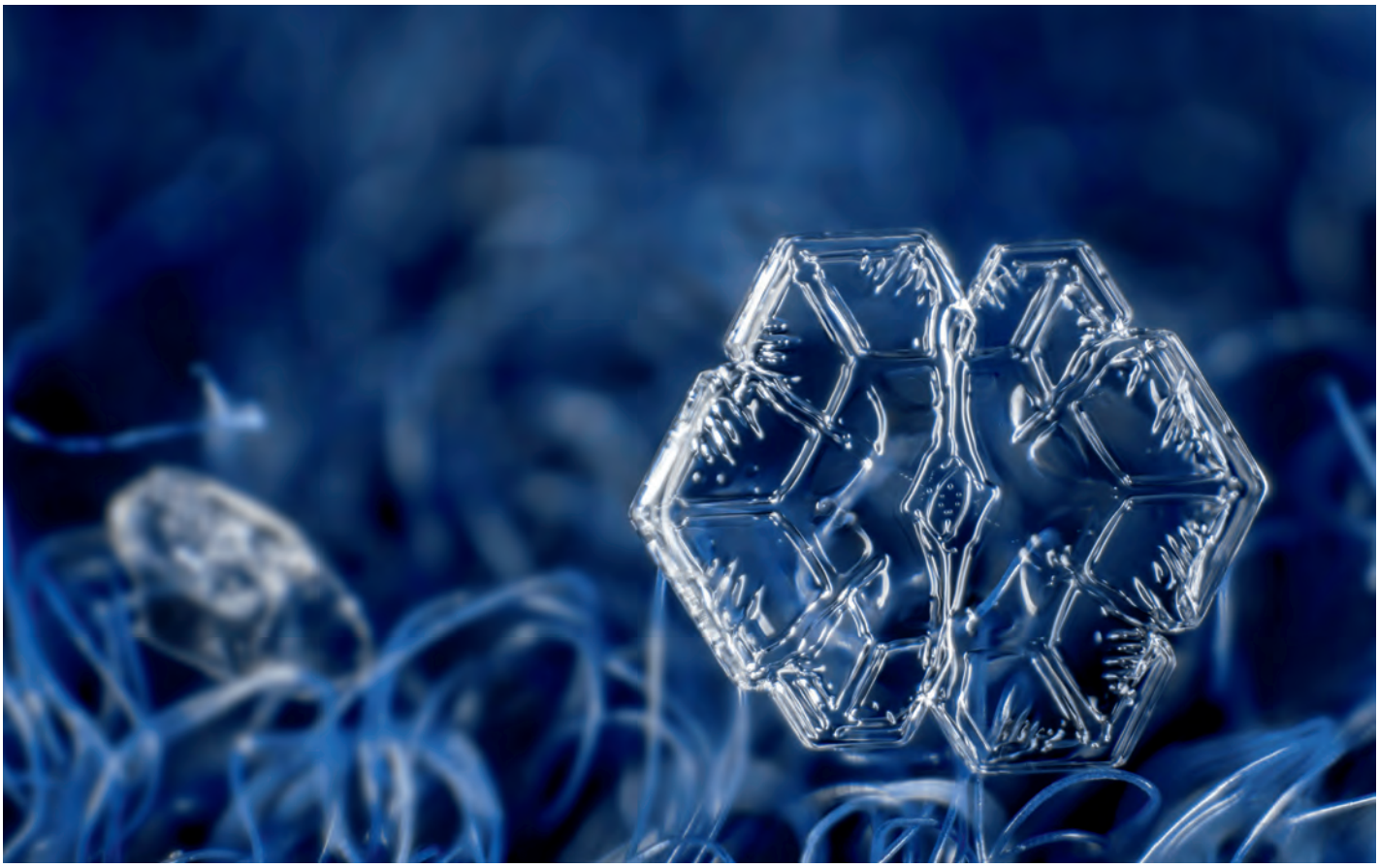








O, CHRISTMAS TREE!

Evergreens have a long journey from nursery to your living room.

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY **ZACK HAROLD**

Gene Bailey, left, and his son-in-law Dave Evans survey a plot of Christmas trees where Bailey recently cut some underbrush.

This is a Christmas story, but it does not begin with the sound of reindeer hooves on rooftop, or a snowman suddenly come to life, or the Whos down in Who-ville.

This story begins with some seeds. They arrive at the Clements State Tree Nursery in West Columbia packed into heavy sacks. The nursery, operated by the state Division of Forestry, uses a lot of seed each year. The facility has about 700,000 seedlings growing at any one time on its 126 acres, with 25 different species of tree, including four varieties of evergreen.

When the weather begins to warm in mid-spring, the seed goes into the hopper of a mechanical seeder, a machine that looks something like a push lawn mower. Workers push the seeder along the four-foot-wide, 600-foot-long seedbeds they've prepared, depositing each one a half-inch deep into the soil.

Once in the ground, the seeds receive a thin covering of sawdust, which helps hold in moisture while they germinate. "They would dry up and die if you didn't protect them," says nursery property manager Jason Huffman.

The seeds begin to sprout from the ground about a month later. They are allowed to grow for about 18 months. By this point they will be six to twelve inches tall, just the right size to be packed up and shipped.

The Clements State Tree Nursery begins taking orders each fall for its seedlings. Customers can purchase as few as 25 seedlings or several thousand. Some of the plants are used in reforestation projects and coal mine reclamation work, while other customers order trees just to spruce up their properties. Many of the nursery's evergreen seedlings, however, are destined for Christmas tree farms around the state.

Workers use a plant harvester to lift entire seedbeds and take them into the nursery's packing facility. There, workers pack the roots of the tiny trees into a polymer gel and ship them to their new homes.

Go Tell It on the Mountain

While most of us only think about Christmas trees when the weather starts to turn cold, it's a yearlong concern for the dedicated farmers who grow them.

Gene Bailey has owned Bluestone Nursery in Mercer County since 1964. Each year, Bailey welcomes hundreds of families onto his 97-acre farm to find their perfect Christmas trees hiding among the rows and rows of evergreens growing on the property. It takes a lot of work to get to this point, however.

Throughout the spring, summer, and fall Bailey and his son-in-law Dave Evans are in a constant battle with undergrowth, trudging between the rows of trees and chopping up the vegetation with a brush hog mower. "I don't like to use too many chemicals anymore," Bailey says. Controlling the brush is especially important around young trees that could be choked out by weeds.

While Bluestone Nursery's annual Christmas tree sale doesn't begin until the day after Thanksgiving, caring for the trees is year-round work.

Bailey also must contend with pests and disease. He says nearly all trees contain the mold spores necessary for root rot and are only waiting for the right conditions for the disease to take off. He's also had problems with buffalo nut, a parasitic shrub that winds around a tree's stem and eventually starves its host to death.

The biggest threat to Bailey's crop, however, has four legs and a white tail. "With all the disease and insect problems we've got, deer are the No. 1 pest," he says. The damage isn't hard to spot. More than a few trees on the farm have had their branches nibbled back to the stem. Bailey says he could fence his plots, but the benefit-cost ratio doesn't work out in his favor. For now, he's tying white garbage bags to the limbs of some trees, hoping they will move in the wind and scare the deer away.

Once a year, usually in the summertime, Bailey, Evans, and Evans' children head into the fields to shape the trees with hedge trimmers and small saws. It's a pretty simple job—workers just trim the branches into the conical shape of a classic Christmas tree. They must be careful to only trim the new growth, however, or else the trees' future growth will be impeded. They also cut down the top of the tree, called the "terminal." This causes the tree to grow its branches closer together, resulting in a denser tree. "Some people like a real manicured look," Evans says. "We don't. Our preference is to get it a little more natural looking. It's OK if it gets a few holes in it, because that's a good place for an ornament."

Christmas trees have been Gene Bailey's lifelong passion. He started growing his first trees in 1946, when he was about 12 years old, and sold a few to his relatives. "I've always been interested in evergreen trees," he says. "When I was in high school, I spent a lot of time in the library. And most of what I did was looking up information about evergreen trees."

In 1947, he went to work on a Christmas tree farm owned by a doctor in Princeton. He helped harvest trees, many of which were sold to wholesalers across West Virginia and as far away as North Carolina. He also helped develop a few new plots and learned how to tell one evergreen from another and how to care for the trees. "Of course, we didn't know much in those days," he says.

Each January, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources and Department of Environmental Protection host a Christmas tree recycling event at the Capitol Market in Charleston.

COURTESY OF THE WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Although Bailey eventually went off to college and became a teacher, he kept his job at the Christmas tree farm for nearly two decades. He remembers exactly where he was on November 22, 1962 when he learned President John F. Kennedy was assassinated: He was feeding trees through a baler. Workers began harvesting trees each November and, by Christmas, they'd harvested and baled as many as 7,000.

He left the job when the trees on his own property were mature enough to be harvested. There were lots of wild conifers already on the property when Bailey bought the first section of his farm. He shaped up a few and sold them as Christmas trees that year but cut the rest down and, with the help of a neighbor's team of mules, cleared them from the hillsides and planted seedlings in their place.

Four decades later, hundreds of families each year make the trip to Bluestone Nursery to choose and cut their own Christmas trees. Bailey and Evans open for business on the day after Thanksgiving and are at the farm each day until Christmas, from 9 a.m. until dark.

Most of his business comes from surrounding counties, but people from Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina regularly stop by on their way home from Thanksgiving dinner. Bailey has even sent trees home with travelers headed to Florida.

In the Bleak Midwinter

Christmas trees are the centerpiece of holiday festivities, but most meet a rather inglorious end. Many of us simply throw our trees to the curb once the presents are unwrapped and the ornaments go back into their boxes. But for the past decade, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR) and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) have provided a more purposeful afterlife for Christmas trees.

Each January, on the weekend after New Year's Day, DEP and DNR staffers set up shop at the Capitol Market in Charleston to collect trees for recycling. The service is free but there's one requirement. "It's got to be a clean tree," says Sandy Rogers, manager for DEP's Rehabilitation Environmental Action Plan (REAP) program. "We've had them come in with lights still

Trees collected at the Capitol Market event wind up in reservoir lakes around the state, where they serve as fish attractors.

COURTESY OF JAMES WALKER

wrapped around them. And what I hate is the old-school tinsel."

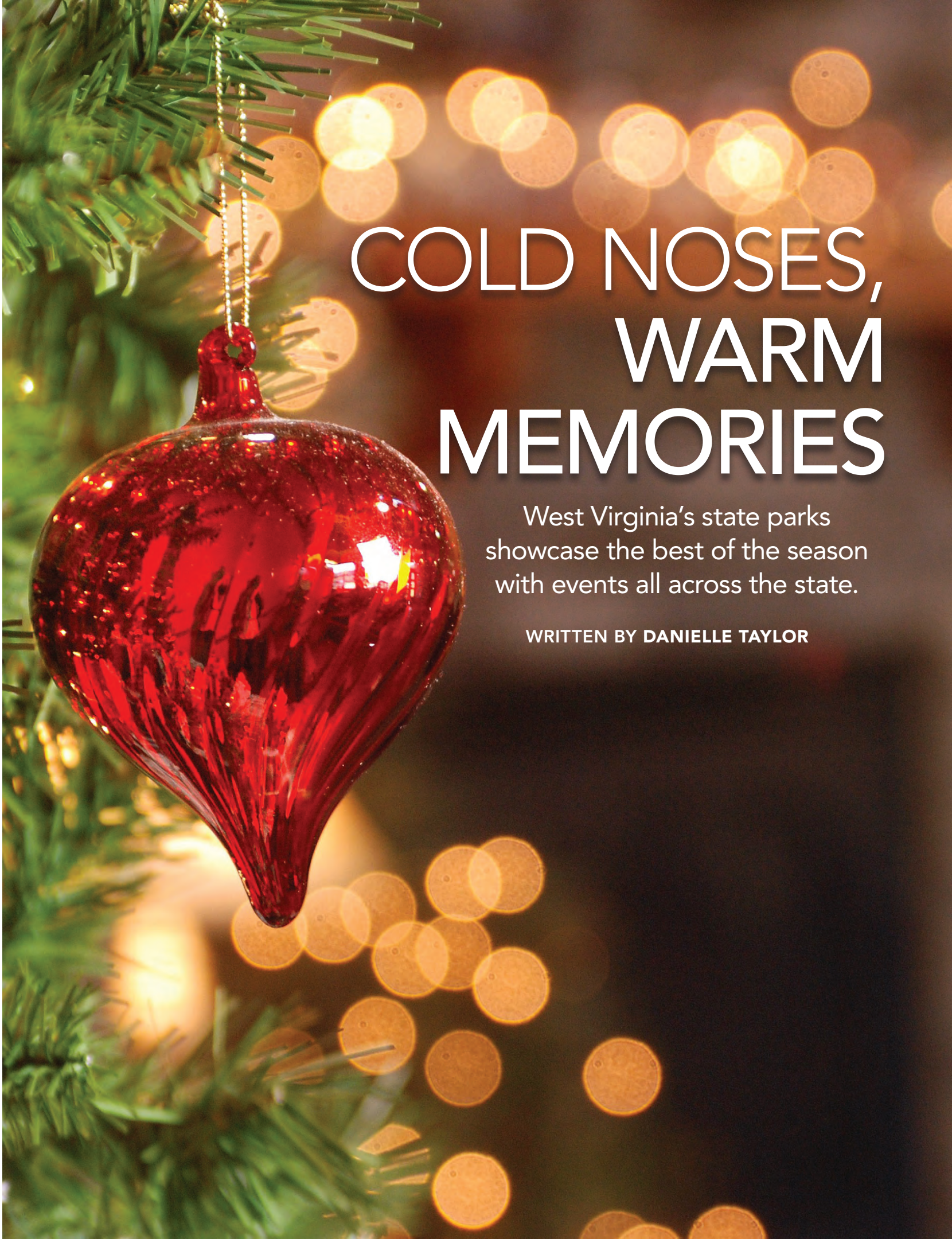
In 2015, workers collected 1,500 Christmas trees. DEP workers and contractors loaded these trees onto trucks and hauled them to reservoir lakes around the state. These manmade lakes provide very little natural cover for fish, so DNR and Army Corps of Engineers employees, along with local fishing clubs and other volunteers, take advantage of the lakes' winter drawdown to place old Christmas trees on lake bottoms to serve as fish attractors.

"It seems to be working pretty well," says Jim Walker, fisheries management biologist at DNR's State Wildlife Center in French Creek. DNR targets a half-dozen lakes each year for the project. If the water in a reservoir is low enough, workers drag the trees into place with four-wheelers or haul them in pickup trucks. Other times, the trees are loaded into boats and sunk to the bottom with cinderblocks.

When the water levels are raised in spring, the trees first attract smaller fish that feed off the zooplankton growing there. "Once those smaller fish are there, that's going to attract your predator fish—your bluegill, walleye, and catfish. They're going to feed on those smaller fish," Walker says. "They like to hide and wait for something to swim by, and they'll shoot out and grab it."

Once the larger fish are there, anglers aren't far behind. "We try to put a buoy on each one that says 'fish attractor,' so people know where to come and fish," Walker says. The trees break down after a few years, since the wood decays as the lake level rises and falls. When that happens, DNR just trucks in more recycled Christmas trees. "When we run into people while we're out, they're like, 'Wow, we are so glad you're doing this,'" Walker says. "It's a win-win situation."

Or, to put it another way, it's the gift that keeps on giving.



COLD NOSES, WARM MEMORIES

West Virginia's state parks showcase the best of the season with events all across the state.

WRITTEN BY **DANIELLE TAYLOR**

Enjoy miles and miles of holiday lights at Chief Logan State Park's annual Christmas in the Park Light Show, running until December 31.

COURTESY OF MARY MCCOMAS

Santa's not just coming to town this year; he's coming to the entire Mountain State. To welcome him, and to help all West Virginians stay active through the long winter, staff at many state parks have planned a range of programs to help visitors enjoy natural beauty in this frosty season.

While some events focus on the holidays, others put a winter spin on programs offered year-round, and still more involve one-of-a-kind experiences found only in West Virginia. As you make plans with your family this season, consider adding the following possibilities to your calendar.

Christmas in the Park Light Show

Chief Logan State Park | Nov. 24–Dec. 31

Now in its 23rd year, this much-loved holiday tradition features hundreds of thousands of Christmas lights decorating a drive that meanders several miles through the park. Light-up decorations include seasonal characters, Christmas cards, messages of peace, and more. The event is free and reservations are not required, but volunteers will accept donations to keep the event running in future years.

Christmas at Cass

Cass Scenic Railroad State Park | Nov. 25–Dec. 31

You may not have known it, but West Virginia plays an important role in making sure Christmas is a success for kids around the world. "Cass is where the elves go to train to see if they're good enough to be North Pole elves," explains Matt Scott, marketing manager with West Virginia Mountain Rail Adventures. To join in on the experience, visitors can jump on the Elf Limited Train at Cass Depot and ride it into the Parliament of Pines, the ancient grove of hidden Christmas trees where Santa chooses elves to become North Pole toymakers. Costumed characters complete the experience, and each rider gets a banquet bucket of elf snacks and a souvenir from the Parliament of Pines. Ticket prices run $47 for adults, $41 for kids 3 and older, and free for kids under 3. The event runs Wednesday through Sunday evenings at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. from Nov. 25 through Dec. 11.

West Virginia state parks offer plenty of holiday activities for families, from meet-and-greets with Santa to homemade sled races.

COURTESY OF WALTER SCRIPTUNAS III, SCRIPTUNASIMAGES.COM; COURTESY OF WV DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Cass lights up its Main Street for the entire month of December and, on the evening of Dec. 9, Santa comes to town to light the Cass Christmas tree, take photos, and share candy canes and Christmas cheer with his young fans. The Cass Company Store opens its doors to shoppers on December 10 and 11, featuring handmade West Virginia gifts, and the adjacent Last Run Restaurant will offer holiday baked goods and sweet treats for sale.

Chief's Challenge Bonfire and Hiking Tales

Pipestem Resort State Park | Dec. 3

Did you join in on the Chief's Challenge to hike 100 miles in West Virginia's state parks and state forests this year? If so, celebrate your accomplishment with State Parks Chief Sam England and your fellow hikers! If not, draw some inspiration from others who have covered significant ground on the state's public lands this year. Chief England says, "The bonfire will be a general celebration of trails—we'll have hiking events that weekend and a little entertainment, but it's mainly a chance to sit around and enjoy a campfire in the wintertime and enjoy the park."

Park staff will provide marshmallows to roast, and attendees can share tales of their hiking adventures around the fire. All are welcome to join, regardless of participation in the challenge, and the event is free.

Breakfast with Santa

North Bend State Park | Dec. 17
Blackwater Falls State Park | Dec. 18

Kids from all across West Virginia can meet the jolly old elf himself and perhaps even share a pancake or two at one of the Breakfast with Santa events held in parks across the state. At Tygart Lake State Park, Santa fans can meet the big guy, then take a horse-drawn sleigh ride (weather permitting), visit Santa's workshop, and make some crafts of their own to take home. Mrs. Claus will join her husband at North Bend State Park, and then Santa makes his last morning appearance for a brunch buffet at Blackwater Falls State Park, which will also include Christmas carols and some history on the carols sung. Visits with Santa are free, but meals incur a per-person fee.

Canaan Christmas Celebration

Canaan Valley Resort State Park | Dec. 24–25

Many West Virginia families choose to spend their Christmas holiday in the cabins, cottages, and lodge at Canaan Valley, in part because Santa and Mrs. Claus make it one of their last stops before heading out on their sleigh on Christmas Eve. After a holiday buffet that evening, Mrs. Claus reads "The Night Before Christmas" and leads a round of Christmas carols before introducing Santa, who brings gifts for the kids. On Christmas Day, the lodge again puts out an expansive feast, and visitors can enjoy the park's ice skating, skiing, and tubing (weather permitting) after opening gifts with their families.

New Year's Eve Celebrations

Canaan Valley Resort State Park, North Bend State Park, and Blackwater Falls State Park | Dec. 31

Sing "Auld Lang Syne" amidst beautiful surroundings at one of these state parks, each of which offers a different take on the farewell to the old year and welcoming of the new. Canaan Valley hosts a family party and an adult party to appeal to every guest, with a live band in the lounge for adults and games, confetti, and noisemakers for families. At North Bend, you can enjoy dinner, dancing, and live music with a more intimate crowd. Blackwater Falls offers dinner and evening entertainment for its guests to make the last moments of 2016 memorable. Reservations are required for each event.

First Day Hikes

several state parks | Jan. 1

To help West Virginians kick off the new year with a solid start on their resolutions, several state parks offer staff-led First Day Hikes. At Bluestone State Park, hikers can learn about the history of the park and the surrounding area, and park staff will point out wildlife and natural phenomena to make the hike a fun lesson. At the conclusion of each hike, participants can enjoy hot drinks to energize them for their next adventure. Other First Day hikes occur at Kanawha State Forest, Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, and Pipestem Resort State Park. Participation is free.

Cardboard Duct Tape Sled Race

Blackwater Falls State Park | Feb. 25

To cap off the winter season, the staff at Blackwater Falls State Park hosts the immensely popular Cardboard Duct Tape Sled Race, which pits teams of crafty sledders against one another, four at a time, in their homemade contraptions. Teams can only use cardboard, duct tape, and paint to construct their vessels, which they must be able to exit easily, for safety reasons. Up to five helmeted members can ride at a time. Event organizers award prizes for best time, best themed design, and best team spirit. This year's contest theme is superheroes and villains, which promises to attract a variety of creative entries. Registration for the event costs $1 per sled.

"We had a group from Virginia once, all adults wearing bathrobes and shower caps in a cardboard bathtub with a shower up the back," says Paulita Cousin, the park's naturalist. "They had an absolute ball, which is the whole spirit of the thing."

West Virginia's state parks offer many more activities and events than the ones listed here. For more information on the above events and the complete calendar, visit *wvstateparks.com/calendar.html*.

TOP Get a different view of West Virginia's natural beauty with First Day Hikes. **BOTTOM** Kris Kringle will make several stops at West Virginia State Parks throughout the holiday season.

COURTESY OF WV DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Trailblazing

Snowmobiling is a little-known, yet thrilling, pastime for all ages—and West Virginia's highlands are a snow sports paradise.

WRITTEN BY **MIKENNA PIEROTTI**
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **CARLA WITT FORD**

The upper elevations of Pocahontas County in winter are not for the faint of heart. At 4,500 feet, the wind howls. The snow swells and drifts like the sea and, from most vantage points, all you can see is a vast stretch of bare trees and jagged pines.

But on a certain section of the Highland Scenic Highway—also known as the parkway section of West Virginia Route 150, which runs through the heart of the Monongahela National Forest—you'll find groups of diehard snow worshipers atop Arctic Cat and Yamaha snowmobiles, barreling through drifts and taking the swaying curves of the road in stride.

When most of us are bundled up against sub-freezing temperatures outside, these winter recreation aficionados are just getting warmed up. "Being a West Virginia native, I bought my first snowmobile probably in the mid-'80s," says Andy Gibson, one of the brave riders you might run into on the highway. He's also an outdoor adventure lead supervisor at Snowshoe Mountain, one of the state's premier four-season resort destinations.

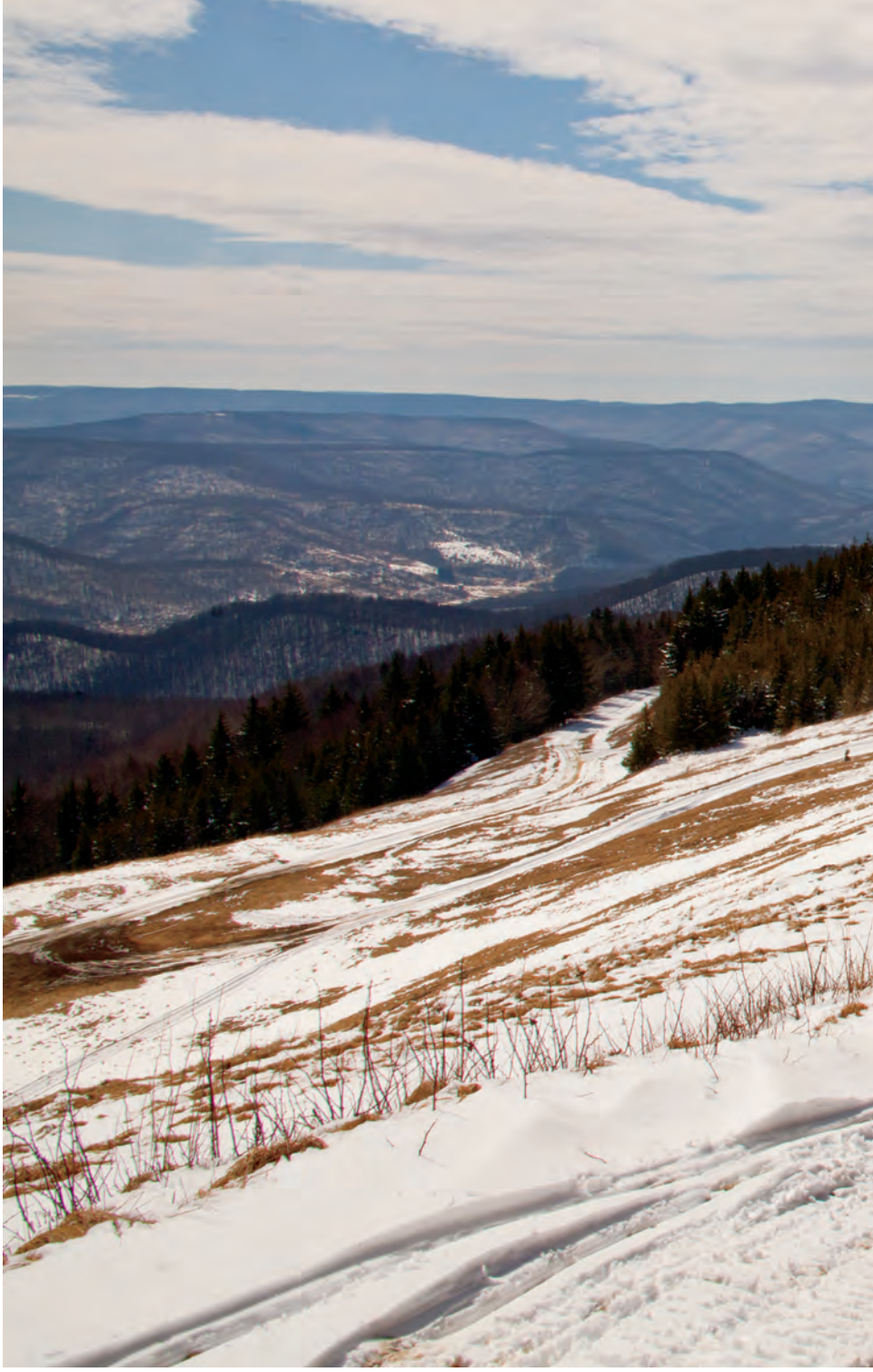
A man with 25 or so years of snowmobiling under his belt, Gibson's unofficial title is "outdoor adventure guru" and he takes winter sports very seriously. "It was just another form of transportation in the winter. It was something we always did, but it's also a lot of fun, so it became something of a passion of mine."

Although snowmobiling is not the Mountain State's biggest winter pastime—that honor probably belongs to downhill and cross-country skiing—this high-octane form of recreation is an underappreciated opportunity for adventure-oriented people like Gibson. Don't believe us? Head on out to the Highland Scenic Highway, but only if you have a good, four-wheel drive vehicle or a snowmobile of your own.

"The scenic highway runs through some of the most beautiful terrain in the Monongahela National Forest. The parkway section of the route, where snowmobilers frequent, follows the ridgeline for about 22 miles. In the wintertime they don't plow it. They just put up a sign that says 'No Snow Removal Beyond This Point.'" Once the signs go up, Gibson says, the sledheads appear, and wheeled traffic virtually disappears as everything from Cranberry Glades to Seneca Rocks gets painted over in white and the wind whips it all into dramatic peaks and valleys.

Riders are restricted to the roadway only, but he says that's never been a deterrent among snowmobiling enthusiasts. "You can get miles and miles of great riding in," he says. "And the views are amazing."

For many who live among the ridgetops in this high country, snowmobiling is part of life, though most of it is done on private land. While most of West Virginia has vast swaths of protected lands where snowmobiles are not permitted and warmer winter weather in the southern counties means snowfall isn't always adequate, things are different here. "With the elevations and the extreme winter weather, if folks have access to the mountaintops and if they use an ATV, chances are they have a snowmobile, too," Gibson says. "They have to."



But novice snowmobilers are also in luck in the state. In fact, Snowshoe Mountain's three distinct snowmobiling adventure tours attract thousands of people of all experience levels every year. This sport is even touted as one of the resort's most popular winter activities.

Ben Brannon, snowmobile enthusiast and former outdoor adventure manager at Snowshoe, says a lot of the guests he saw at Snowshoe had never ridden before. "They're often Southern skiers who rarely see snow in their home states and rarely get to go out in it. Snowmobiling here is a very immersive experience for them."

Snowmobiling isn't for everyone, but a tour at Snowshoe can get even the most nervous rider up

and running. "It's an active riding machine. You can't just sit on it and steer. There's motion involved—you have to lean into turns and move around in the seat. In challenging terrain we even teach people how to stand up and shift their weight. You can't be timid on it. When the snow is deep, you have to keep that momentum," Brannon says.

Snowshoe is famous for its skiing, snowcat tours, tubing, and off-road Polaris RZR adventures. But snowmobiling offers high-octane excitement on the level of jet skiing or ATV riding, set in the awe-inspiring winter wonderland of Pocahontas County. "These people are looking for something a little faster, a little more challenging," Gibson says. "If they go with us, we're going to teach them everything they need to know to control the machine—proper leaning, how to accelerate on the turns, and how to brake. We'll even supply the helmets. They just have to bring proper footwear, gloves, and layers—lots of layers."

For first-timers and families, Snowshoe employees recommend the resort's most popular product—the evening tour along the property's famous natural basin. "This is where we do a one-hour tour on the slopes, where it's snowmaking-supported. It's a great introduction to the sport and it's perfect for families because children can ride as well," Gibson says.

Led by expert guide staff, the tour begins with a full safety briefing and ample time to practice and get comfortable before a group is allowed to move out onto the slopes. Available mid-December to the end of

March, the one-hour basin tour even permits families with children as young as 6 and as old as 15 to ride as passengers over fun but accessible terrain—gentle inclines, declines, and side slopes that allow riders to take in sweeping views of the resort and the snow-dusted mountains beyond.

But if you'd rather ride with sun and wide winter skies overhead, the daytime backcountry family tour is another great option, and both children and adults can ride as passengers. Also great for novice snowmobilers, guides start with a safety briefing and the pace is slow, progressing as riders gain confidence moving through scenic vistas—photo-ops included—and sparkling wilderness trails. Guests arrive and go through the check-in process on a demo machine, where adventure staff cover all the basics of correct riding style and best practices.

From there, adventure staff run at least two practice laps with guests through all types of terrain. Although this tour is geared toward the lowest level of rider, the group can split up based on comfort and skill so everyone has a good time.

The nearly two-hour backcountry family tour is weather-dependent, however, so Snowshoe adventure staff recommend signing up for a basin tour and asking about upgrading later if the weather looks promising. It might take a couple of snowfalls to get the perfect conditions, but the highly trained staff can typically make a determination at least a week in advance.

But if you'd rather venture off the map entirely and you have the confidence to pull it off, Snowshoe has a snowmobiling experience it refers to as "the backcountry adventure." This tour also depends on weather and can take up to two hours. Passengers are not allowed due to increased chance of rollover when crossing varied terrain. Although Snowshoe recommends tour guests have some snowmobiling experience, if you've ridden ATVs, jet skis, or motorcycles comfortably, you'll probably catch on fast. This tour covers miles of somewhat unpredictable ground: deep snowfields, narrow hill climbs, fire roads, towering old-growth spruce forests, and even frozen creek crossings under the right conditions.

No one would disagree that West Virginia's often-extreme terrain carries with it unique challenges, but Gibson says that's what makes it such a great experience for anyone who ventures to try gas-powered winter fun. "A snowmobile is its own beast, its own machine. There are little quirks and nuances you need to know about. But by the end of an hour, we can have almost anyone riding like a pro." *snowshoemtn.com*

December Events 800.CALL.WVA

gotowv.com | wvstateparks.com/calendar.html

COURTESY OF MARY MCCOMAS

DECEMBER 1–31
Christmas in the Park
Featuring two miles of brilliant light displays, this holiday favorite is open from Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve, seven days a week, from 5 to 10 p.m. Admission is free. Chief Logan State Park, Logan, 304.792.7125

DECEMBER 2–3, 8–10, 15–17
Let It Snow
Greenbrier Valley Theatre
Lewisburg
304.645.3838 or 866.888.1411

DECEMBER 1–11
Christmas at Cass
Cass Scenic Railroad State Park
Cass
877.686.7245, option 5

Christmas Fantasy Light Show
Krodel Park
Point Pleasant
304.675.3844

Holiday in the Park
Parkersburg City Park and Southwood Park
Parkersburg
304.428.1130

Holiday of Lights Festival
Bluefield
304.327.2448

DECEMBER 2
Christmas Parade
Marlinton
800.336.7009

DECEMBER 2–3, 9–10
Christmas Village Way Back Weekend Festival
Heritage Farm
Huntington
304.522.1244

DECEMBER 2–3, 9–10, 16–17
Santa's Christmas Adventure
The Resort at Glade Springs
Daniels
866.562.8054

DECEMBER 2–4, 9–11, 16–18, 21–27
Celebration of Lights
Morris Park
Fairmont
304.366.4550

DECEMBER 3
Christmas Parade
Uptown Beckley
304.256.1776

Christmas Bazaar and Parade
Hinton
304.466.3255

Christmas Parade
Main Street
New Haven and Mason
304.882.3203

DECEMBER 4
East River Mountain Town Band Christmas Concert
Pipestem Resort State Park
Pipestem
304.466.1800

DECEMBER 8–11
A Ghost Tale for Dickens
Charleston Civic Center
Charleston
304.345.1500

DECEMBER 9–10
The Nutcracker
The Clay Center
Charleston
304.561.3570

DECEMBER 9–11
Ballroom Dancing Weekend
Pipestem Resort State Park
Pipestem
304.466.1800

DECEMBER 10
Visit With Santa and More
Tygart Lake State Park
Grafton
304.265.6144

Christmas Tour of Homes
Bramwell
304.248.8381

DECEMBER 17
Breakfast With Santa
North Bend State Park
Cairo
304.643.2931

DECEMBER 18
Brunch With Santa
Blackwater Falls State Park
Davis
304.259.5216

DECEMBER 24–25
Canaan Christmas Celebration
Canaan Valley Resort State Park
Canaan Valley
304.866.4121

DECEMBER 31
New Year's Eve Party
Blackwater Falls State Park
Davis
304.259.5216

New Year's Eve Party
North Bend State Park
Cairo
304.643.2931

Canaan New Year's Bash
Canaan Valley Resort State Park
Canaan Valley
304.866.4121

NOTE: Times and events are subject to change. Please call ahead before attending an event.

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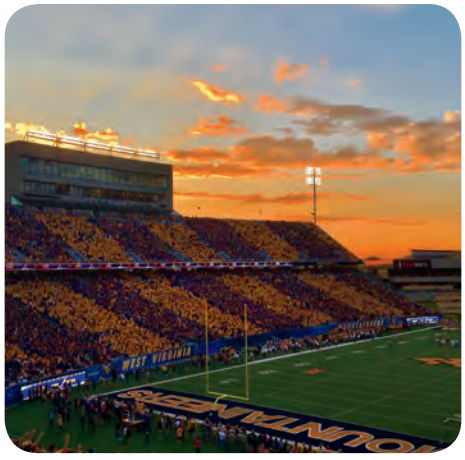
WONDERGRAMS

Share your photos of West Virginia with us! Send Instagram-style photos to *wonderfulwv@newsouthmediainc.com* or use the hashtag #wondergrams on Instagram.

LEFT TO RIGHT Cardinal in Jackson County photographed by Philip Miles; Augusta pond photographed by Richard Marlow; deer at Blackwater Falls State Park photographed by Laura Moul; view from Bickle Knob fire tower photographed by Randy Berisford; Kingwood barn and silo photographed by Candy Thompson; snowy day in Raleigh County photographed by Pamela Lilly; First Day Hike in Kanawha State Forest photographed by Zack Harold; sunset in Morgantown photographed by Aiden Boone; Sutton backroad photographed by Jessica Cox; starscape at Canaan Valley Resort State Park photographed by Jogues Prandoni; Coopers Rock State Park photographed by Kimberly Fowler. *Photos published at editor's discretion.*



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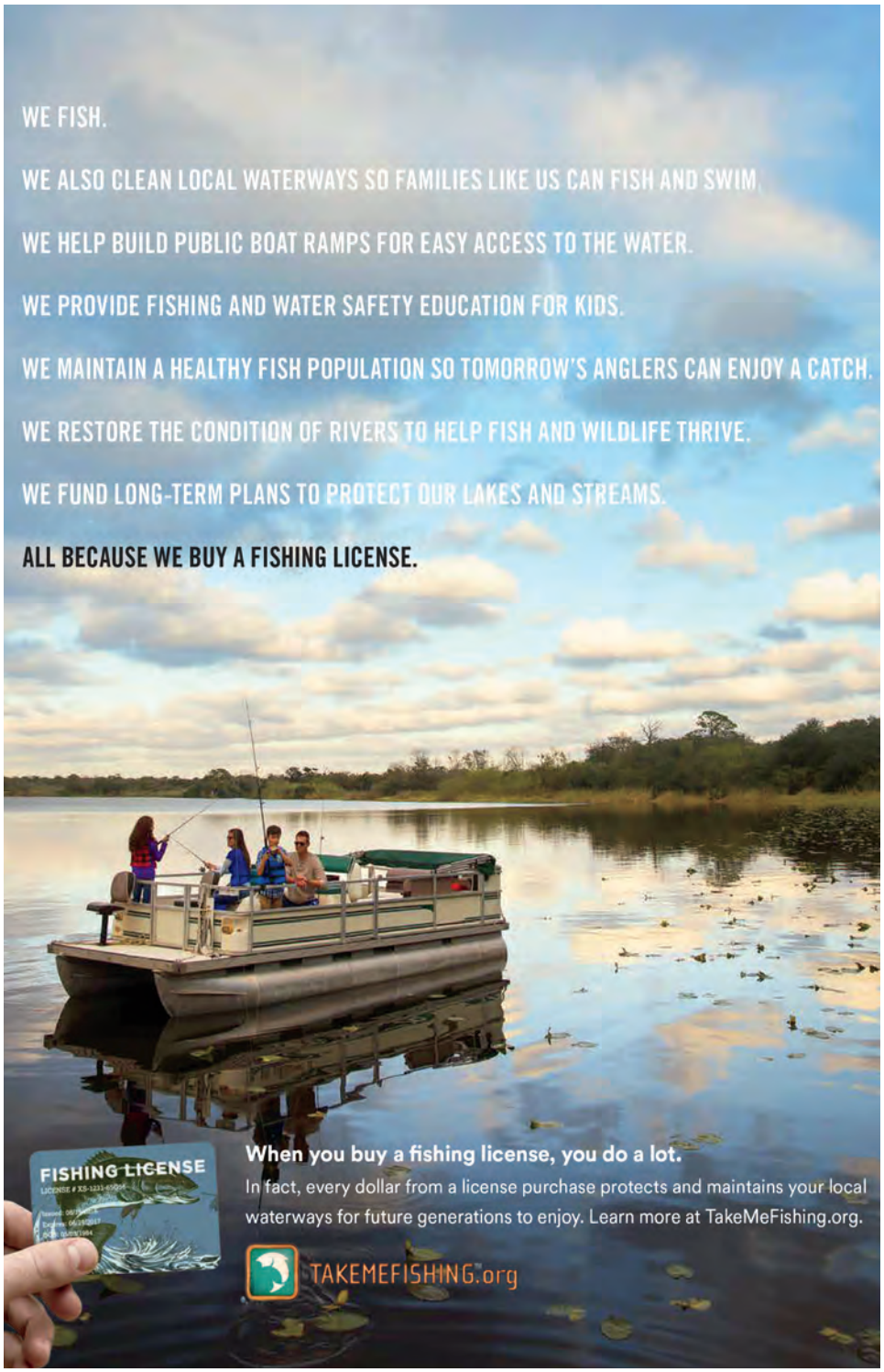
August 2017 $3.00



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ON THE COVER Brook trout by Reuben Browning, *instagram.com/reuben.browning*

AUGUST

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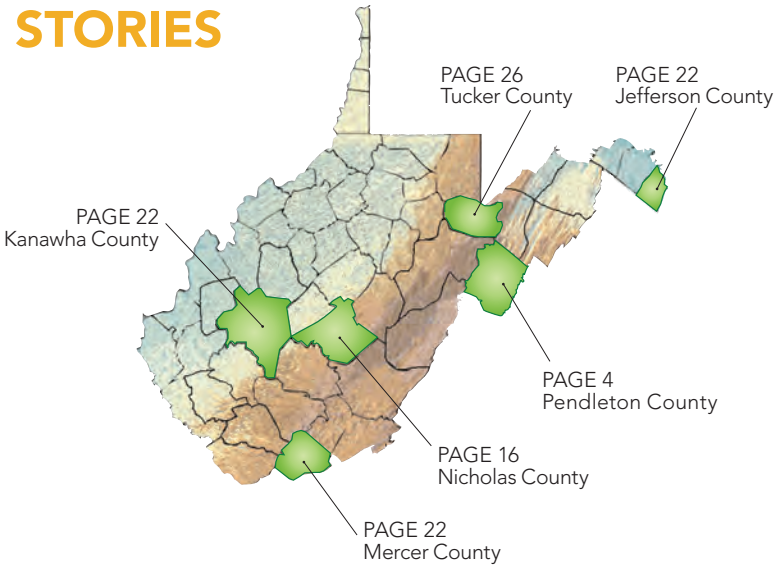

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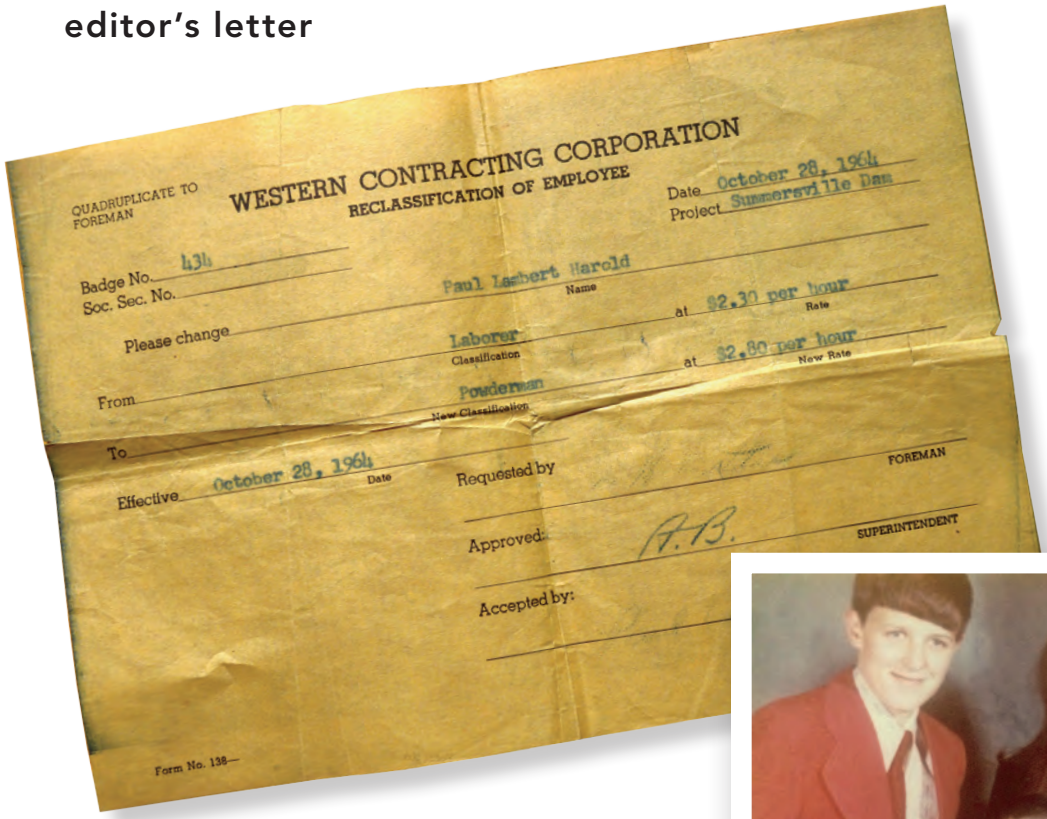
Enjoying a late-summer swim in Summersville Lake.
Photo by Nikki Bowman

West Virginia
Wild and Wonderful



QUADRUPLICATE TO FOREMAN

WESTERN CONTRACTING CORPORATION

RECLASSIFICATION OF EMPLOYEE

Date October 28, 1964

Project Summersville Dam

Badge No. 434

Soc. Sec. No.

Please change Paul Lambert Harold (Name)

at $2.30 per hour (Rate)

From Laborer (Classification)

at $2.80 per hour (New Rate)

To Powderman (New Classification)

Effective October 28, 1964 (Date)

Requested by (FOREMAN)

Approved: R.B. (SUPERINTENDENT)

Accepted by:

Form No. 138—

An employee reclassification slip issued to my grandfather when he worked at the Summersville Dam.

BOTTOM The Harold clan in the early 1970s, clockwise from top left: Richard (my dad), Rose Ann, Shelly, Sam, Shirley, Paul, and Doug.

I recently spent a marathon day in Summersville reporting this month's story about scuba diving (*page 16*). On my way home, I nosed my Subaru off U.S. Route 60 just east of Smithers and made the familiar winding drive to my paternal grandmother's house. Momaw Harold, we grandkids call her.

She didn't know I was coming, although that wasn't a concern—she's the kind of grandma who doesn't mind an unexpected visit. I stopped because I wanted to see her, but also because I heard she had unearthed an interesting artifact of our family's history. And, in a bit of writerly serendipity, it was something that would give me a deeper understanding of the story I was working on.

Sitting on a twin bed in my dad's old bedroom, I watched as she dug a box out of the closet. She opened it, dug around a bit, and extracted a creased leaf of onion skin paper. It read: "Please change Paul Lambert Harold from laborer at $2.30 per hour to powderman at $2.80 per hour effective October 28, 1964."

My grandfather was laid off from the Elkem Metals Plant in Alloy in the early 1960s. Inactivity was not an option, with a wife and five kids at home, but jobs were scarce. One night he asked the people of his church to lay hands on him and pray. Not long after, he was offered a job working on the Summersville Dam.

It was taxing work. Dad remembers Popaw coming through the door of their four-room coal camp house in Jodie and lying face down in the middle of the floor, wracked with what the blasting crew called "powder headaches." Yet he kept going back day after day, until the economy steadied and he was able to return to the plant.

Summersville Lake opened in 1966, and it didn't take long before it became a top tourist destination. My grandparents picnicked with their kids along the lake's shores. My dad practically lived at the Battle Run Campground as a teenager.

I've made my own memories there. I learned to drive a stick-shift on the secluded roads surrounding the reservoir. It's where I first piloted a boat. And, later this summer, it's where I'm planning to make my first scuba dive.

Looking at that dam and all the water it's holding back, I marvel at the men like my grandfather who subdued Nature to create a lake where there wasn't one before.

They weren't thinking of flood control or hydroelectric power or tourism. They just wanted to pay the grocery bill. And yet, for all their hard work, we are all so much richer.

See you at the lake,

ZACK HAROLD, Managing Editor
wonderfulwv@newsouthmediainc.com

Follow me on:
Instagram: zack.harold

Zack Harold is a Southern West Virginia native. He covered education, health, and government at the *Charleston Daily Mail* before becoming the newspaper's features editor. He joined New South Media in 2015, became managing editor of *WV Living* in January 2016, and took over as managing editor of *Wonderful West Virginia* in July 2016.

Pam Kasey has traveled, brewed, farmed, counseled, and renovated, but most loves to write. She has degrees in economics from the University of Chicago and in journalism from West Virginia University. She and her husband and their teenage son live in Morgantown with their cats, Perry and Kellin.

Lori Kersey is a native of Sissonville and a graduate of Marshall and Morehead State universities. She lives in Charleston, where she is a writer and editor. When she's not writing, you can probably find her riding her bike or taking in West Virginia's live music scene.

Anna Patrick, a Canaan Valley native, studied communications at West Liberty University. During that time she interned at the *Charleston Gazette-Mail*, where she fell in love with feature writing. She is now a freelance journalist and enjoys sharing stories of people from all over the Mountain State.

POSTCARD FROM THE PAST

We received a pleasant surprise when we opened the June 2017 issue. The upper postcard on page 14 shows my sister, Jean Anne Winkler Hadder, seated on the diving board.

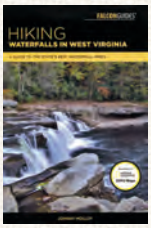
It was the summer of 1951. Jean Anne had just graduated valedictorian of St. Albans High School and had enrolled at William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri. She met her future husband at the school and, after a brief stint as an Army wife, she was employed by the U.S. State Department at three Central and South American embassies. She also accompanied her husband to Saudi Arabia, where he was employed by the Saudi government.

She went to be with the Lord in December 2002. Seeing that old postcard in the magazine brought back many memories. Thank you.

DAVID WINKLER, Hopewell, VA, via mail

Write to us! We would love to hear from you. Send your comments to 709 Beechurst Avenue, Suite 14A, Morgantown, WV 26505 or email us at *wonderfulwv@newsouthmediainc.com*.

WEST VIRGINIA BOOKSHELF



HIKING WATERFALLS IN WEST VIRGINIA: A GUIDE TO THE STATE'S BEST WATERFALL HIKES
by Johnny Molloy

$22.95, 6x9, 214 pages, paperback

This guide will take you through state and national parks, forests, and wilderness areas and from popular city parks to the most secluded corners of West Virginia in search of the state's most spectacular waterfalls. *Hiking Waterfalls in West Virginia* includes detailed hike descriptions as well as history, local trivia, and GPS coordinates, along with maps and color photos for about 100 of the state's most scenic waterfall hikes.

A GUIDE TO HAUNTED WEST VIRGINIA
by Walter Gavenda and Michael Shoemaker

$12.95, 6x9, 272 pages, paperback

Did Chief Cornstalk really put a curse on Point Pleasant? Does a troop of phantom cavalry haunt the battlefield at Droop Mountain? Get a different view of Mothman and the Flatwoods Monster and learn all about Screaming Jenny with this book, which covers every area of the state and is full of ghostly sites to visit. Find out if things that go bump in the night might also go bump during the daytime.

WEST VIRGINIA IMPRESSIONS
Photography by Brian Lemasters and Steve Shaluta

$9.95, 9x8, 80 pages, paperback

In this photographic tribute to the Mountain State, Lemasters and Shaluta skillfully capture the unique character of West Virginia—from the pristine forests in the Dolly Sods Wilderness to Class V river runs, from the New River Gorge Bridge to cardinals perched in snow-covered trees.

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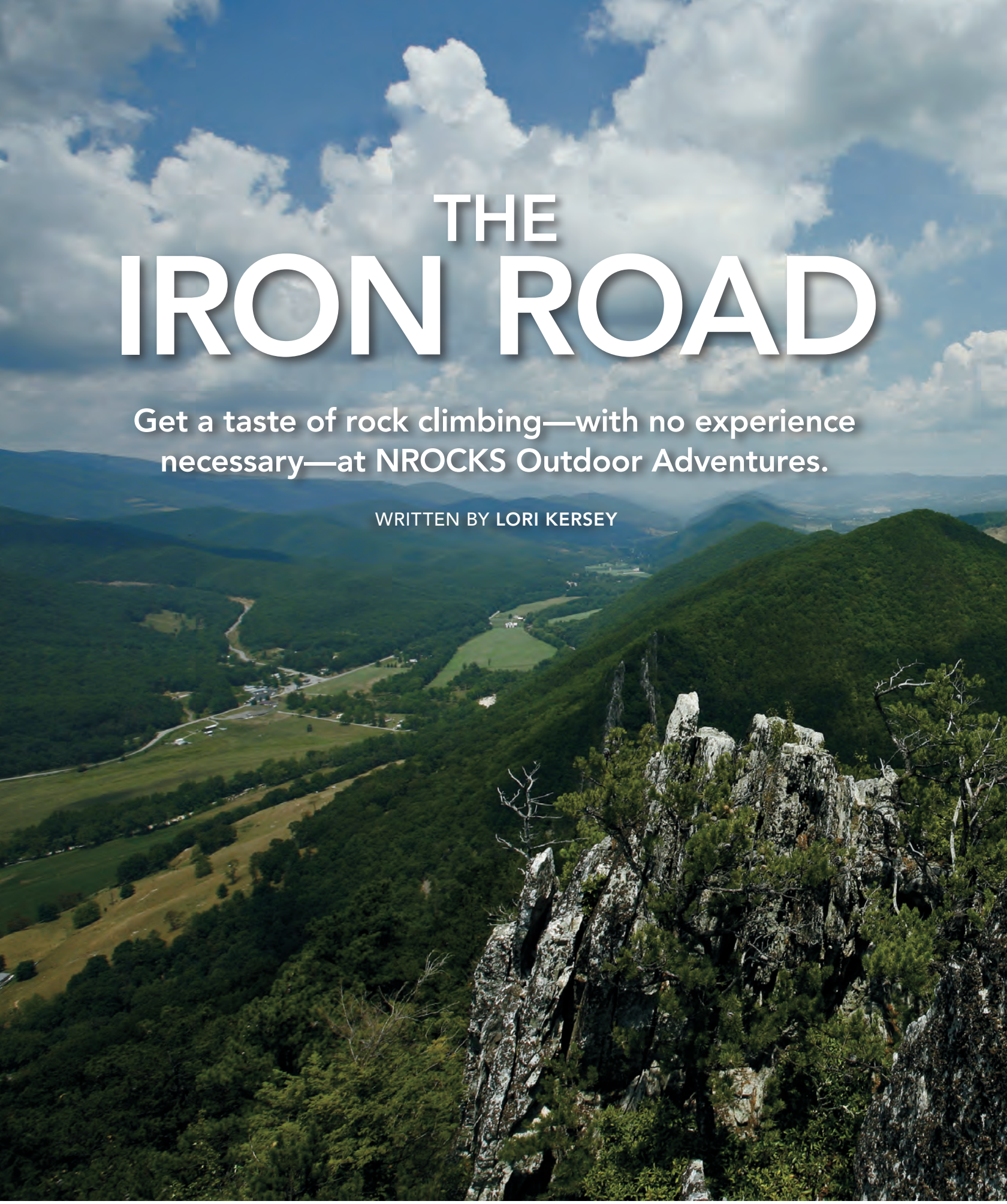


THE IRON ROAD

Get a taste of rock climbing—with no experience necessary—at NROCKS Outdoor Adventures.

WRITTEN BY **LORI KERSEY**

COURTESY OF NROCKS OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

COURTESY OF NROCKS OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Picture it. You're standing on a suspension bridge strung 150 feet off the ground between two razorback edges of a rock formation high in the mountains of Pendleton County. You see treetops swaying beneath you with each shaky step.

Each year, thousands of outdoor enthusiasts flock to NROCKS Outdoor Adventures in Circleville, West Virginia, for their chance to cross that bridge and the rest of the three- to five-hour Via Ferrata, or "iron road," course. Visitors hike breathtaking trails and climb rock faces using steel rungs—all while safely hooked to a cable that runs the length of the course and is anchored to the rock.

The origins of this style of climbing are hazy, but a via ferrata as we know it today dates back to World War I, when both Austro-Hungarian and Italian armies built protected climbing routes to transport troops and supplies through otherwise impassable mountain ranges. Today, via ferratas are mostly used by outdoor enthusiasts, a way for even the most inexperienced adventurer to experience the thrills of rock climbing.

Set in Stone

The via ferrata came to West Virginia in the early 2000s. Stu Hammett, an attorney living in Maryland, purchased 142 acres of the Nelson Rocks Preserve in 1997 with the goal of making it a climbing park. The rocks are part of the same River Knobs that include nearby Seneca Rocks and Champe Rocks. "There was some climbing already established there, but it was largely not very well explored or documented," Hammett says.

He found the property in the time between two unrelated tragedies in his personal life—his father

The idea of building protected climbing routes has likely been around for centuries but Austrio-Hungarian and Italian troops invented via ferrata as we know it today during World War I, as a way to safely transport troops and supplies through the Alps.

COURTESY OF NROCKS OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

and his 8-year-old died six months apart. His son, Pierson, had a rare heart rhythm ailment. "He was a great kid. I wasn't sure at first what I was going to do about Nelson, because I knew Pierson loved Nelson. He had told me that he was excited about it as I was."

Hammett, a rock climber who had suffered a fall a few years earlier that broke his back and left him with limited mobility, built trails and cabins on the property. But his climbing park did not catch on as anticipated. "I thought word would spread like wildfire because it was essentially a new climbing area being made available. But it was a lot slower than I was expecting." He began looking for a way to boost his income and move to West Virginia full-time. That's when he heard about the via ferrata at Torrent Falls in Kentucky's Red River Gorge, the first to be built in the United States. Hammett climbed the course in January 2002. "After I saw what they had—and how it was so solid from a safety standpoint and yet very exciting—I knew that I could do one at Nelson," Hammett says.

By June of the same year, he opened the via ferrata at Nelson Rocks—the nation's second and West Virginia's first and only. To install the route, Hammett took on the role of general contractor and hired a crew of fellow climbers. Each was experienced in sport climbing, which requires drilling stainless steel bolts into the rock, as opposed to the traditional style where climbers use the rock's natural cracks for hand- and footholds.

Things finally started falling in place once the Via Ferrata opened. Even from the first season, Hammett was confident the venture was going to at least be able to support itself. John Hall, owner of Virginia-based Endless Horizons, bought the property in 2009 and expanded the operation. He rebranded the park as NROCKS Outdoor Adventures and, over a two-year period, added a welcome center, expanded lodging, and began offering zipline canopy tours.

"My feet would go out on the bridge, but my knees said, 'if you take one more step I'm buckling, and then you're crawling back on your stomach.'"

LaVonne Hammett

COURTESY OF NROCKS OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

COURTESY OF NROCKS OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

The Via Ferrata remains NROCKS' main attraction, with 10,000 to 15,000 people completing the course each year.

Follow the Iron Road

The minimum age for the route is 13 years old. David Huber, Endless Horizons' director of program operations, says people in their 70s have climbed the Via Ferrata. Still, the route is not for the faint of heart, as Hammett's wife, LaVonne, found out.

The Hammetts used to rock climb together before Stu's injury. She tried the Via Ferrata and got only as far as the ledge leading to the bridge. "It wasn't the height, but it was all the movement," she says. "The bridge moved. The trees moved. The clouds moved. And what you take in visually, your brain reacts to it."

"My feet would go out on the bridge, but my knees said, 'If you take one more step I'm buckling, and then you're crawling back on your stomach.'" LaVonne tried two or three times but never made it across.

The route has several areas near the beginning where people can get off, should they decide the heights are too much. Huber says the staff is good at gauging who might need extra help. "They're trained to safely guide people to the ground," he says. "It's just part of the process, you know. It's not for everyone."

Very few people turn back, though, even if not everyone wants a second go at it. State Delegate Pat McGeehan of Chester tried the Via Ferrata during a family vacation to Canaan Valley a few years ago. McGeehen isn't much of a thrill seeker—he was just planning on taking the kids to a petting zoo when his younger brothers came up with the idea of going to NROCKS.

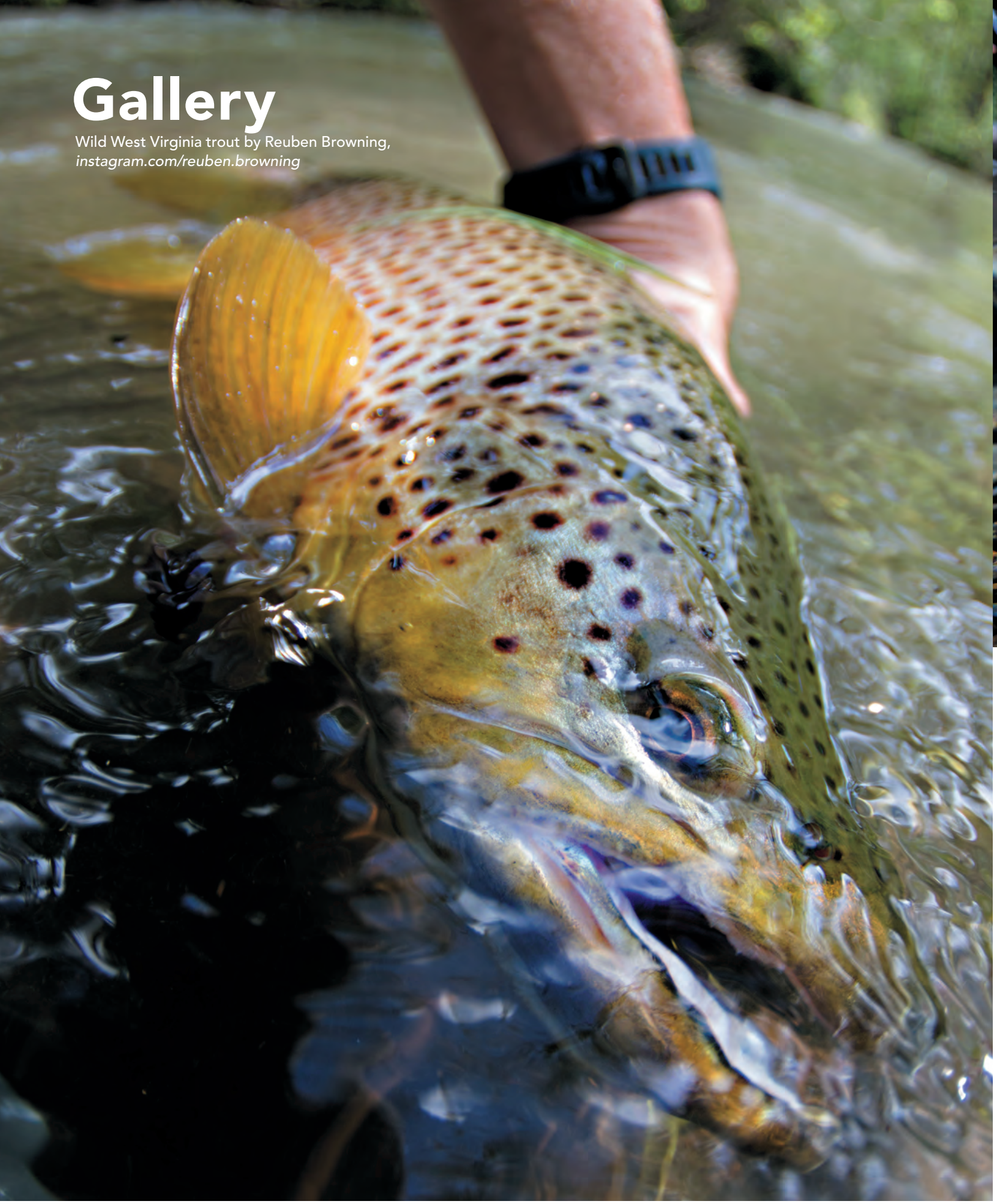
"That's the first time I ever went rock climbing," McGeehan says. "It was exciting. The views were breathtaking. It definitely gives you a little bit of a workout." While he enjoyed the experience, McGeehan says it may be the kind of adventure he experiences only once.

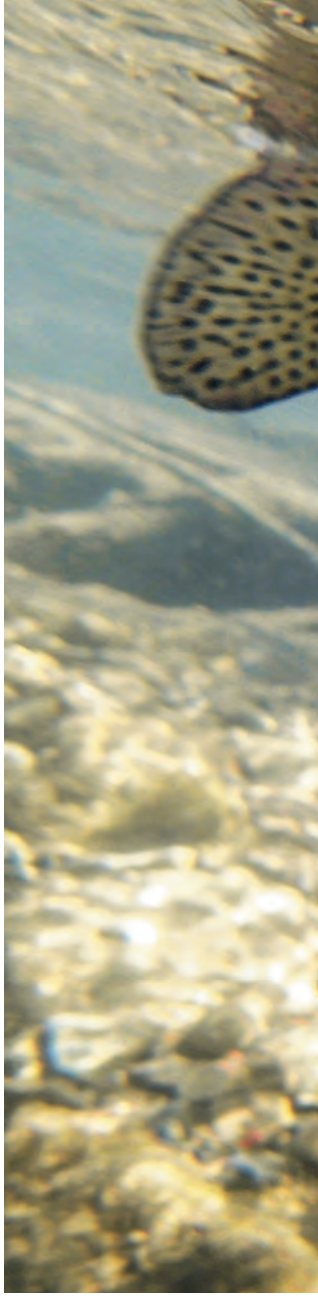
Others thrive on the adrenaline rush. Katie Welch, a 24-year-old EMT from Morgantown, has been rock climbing for more than five years, taking on crags at Seneca Rocks, the New River Gorge, and Coopers Rock State Forest. While a via ferrata might seem like a tamer experience than free-climbing a rock face, "from a rock climber's perspective, I thought it was fun but still challenging," Welch says. "I always felt safe. But at a couple points, even as a climber, it got a little exciting getting close to the edge."

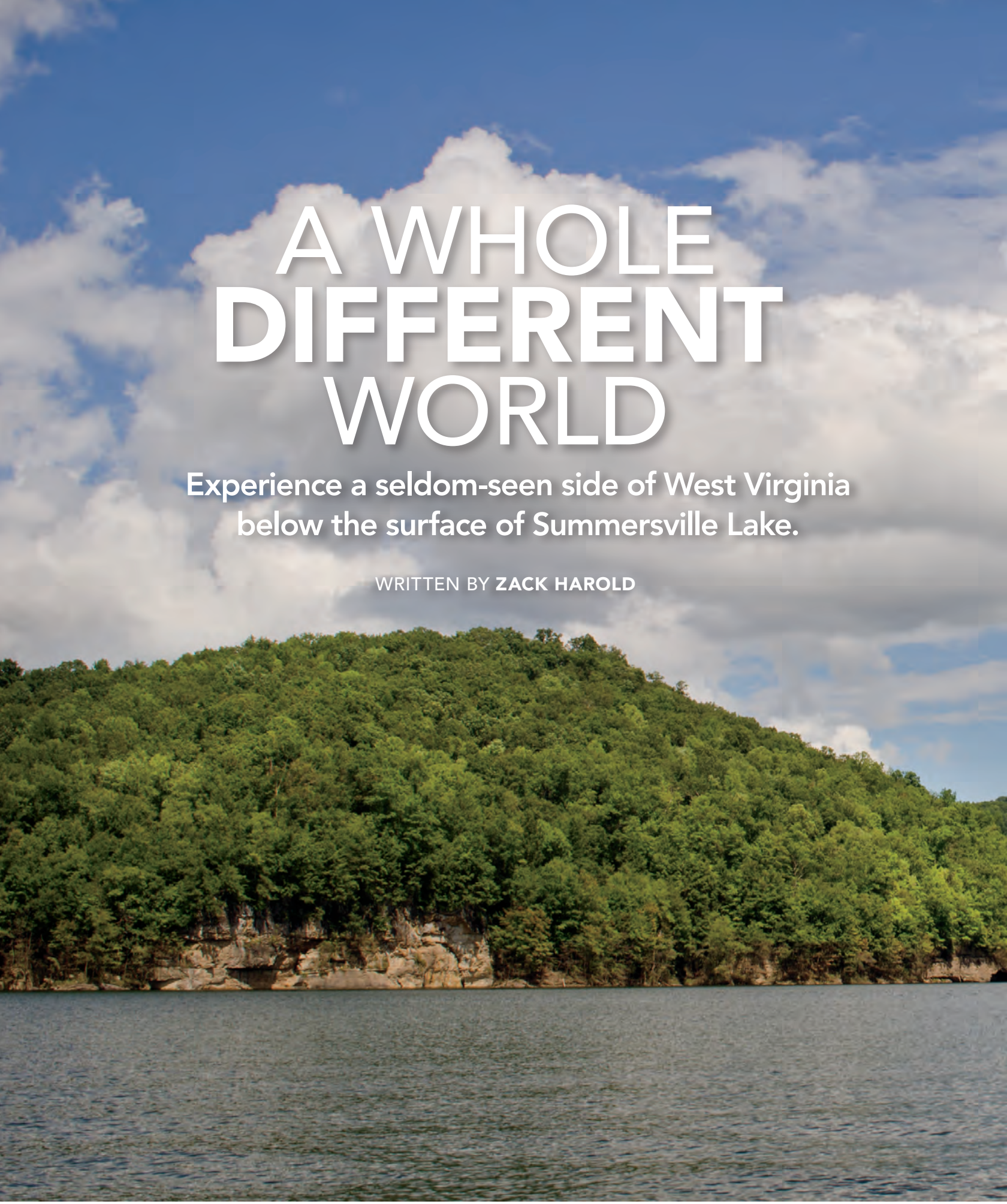
On the suspension bridge, Welch's guide told climbers to take a moment to sit on one of the rungs. "That was such a cool thing, to sit down and there's just you and the planks and all this open space," she says. Welch said she'd recommend a visit to NROCKS to anyone. "It's a great way to get into climbing."

Gallery

Wild West Virginia trout by Reuben Browning,
instagram.com/reuben.browning







A WHOLE DIFFERENT WORLD

Experience a seldom-seen side of West Virginia below the surface of Summersville Lake.

WRITTEN BY **ZACK HAROLD**

NIKKI BOWMAN

The rocky spine of Seneca Rocks. The Glade Creek Grist Mill at Babcock State Park. The gleaming Capitol dome set against a kelly green mountainside. The New River Gorge Bridge, as seen from the rocky outcrop at the end of the Long Point Trail.

No pictures are necessary to conjure these images in the mind of a well-traveled West Virginian, and for good reason. They're gorgeous. Unforgettable. They are also inescapable, emblazoned on countless coffee mugs, refrigerator magnets, and mousepads.

It's only natural to crave a view of our scenic state that hasn't already been photographed to death. So, imagine a valley where a river once ran, with rock formations as big as houses and rock faces stretching to 50 and 100 feet, populated by animal life few people have seen in its natural habitat.

This place exists, and anyone can visit. You just have to find someone who will take you beneath the surface of Summersville Lake.

Diving the Dam

Danny Martin has been diving the lake since 1996, when he agreed to trade work on some jet skis for scuba certification classes. "I said, 'What the heck, I'll try it. If I like it, great. If I don't, they'll just have to pay me.' I loved it." He kept going back for training until he was certified to teach others how to dive. "I enjoyed it so much, I wanted other people to have the same experience," he says.

Now, with more than two decades of diving under his weight belt, Martin knows the lake as well as anyone and can show his students all the most interesting spots. Long Point is probably the most popular destination. Once the dive boat moors at this often-photographed peninsula, students have the choice of heading off in one direction to explore cliffs, swimming another way to check out huge rock formations, or kicking their way through one of the multiple swim-throughs that run beneath Long Point.

Another popular diving spot is Bubble's Cave. It's not actually a cave, but an undercut in the rock that created an air bubble. Divers can swim up, fill the dome with fresh air from their regulators, and surface inside the bubble for a quick chat. Martin also takes divers to Waterfall Cove, where the bottom of the lake slopes off from the shore. It's not uncommon to find a wristwatch lost by one of the scofflaws who risk a $5,000 fine to jump from the cliffs above.

But Martin's favorite place to dive is the face of Summersville Dam itself. It's not too scenic—"what you see above water is pretty much what you see below water," he says—but it's a great place to come nose-to-nose with a catfish or bass. "You just feel so free. It's a whole different world."

Sarge's Dive Shop has taught generations of scuba divers in the clean, clear waters of Summersville Lake.

MARK ALLEN

MARK NADLER

The rock formations that line the shores of Summersville Lake also continue beneath the surface, giving scuba divers plenty of places to explore. These photos show the popular Wedge Rock when the lake is at its summer pool level and after the water is drawn down for the winter.

"A Good Deal of Dynamite"

The magic of Summersville Lake lies in its history. Before the reservoir was West Virginia's largest body of standing water, it was a tangle of hollows hemmed by ancient rock faces.

When Congress passed the Flood Control Act of 1938 as part of a raft of bills meant to loosen the grip of the Great Depression, the legislation included $48.5 million for the construction of the dam on the Gauley River in Nicholas County. Construction would not begin for more than two decades as land agents bought up property for the project, including the entire communities of Gad and Sparks. Workers finally broke ground in February 1960. The dam took six years to complete.

In September 1966, President and First Lady Lyndon B. and Lady Bird Johnson came to Summersville for the dedication. "As we look out at this magnificent new dam and reservoir to our backs," the president said, "I have renewed hope that still other resources—the power of science and the determination of man—will, along with a little prayer and a good deal of dynamite, empower us to quench the thirst of generations to come."

Boaters were on the water almost as soon as the lake was filled. The lake became an even more popular hangout with the opening of campgrounds and the beach. But not everyone was content to remain on the surface.

When State Police Sergeant Robert Adams transferred to the Summersville detachment in the early 1970s, it didn't take him long to break out his scuba gear. "He could not believe what he saw," says Mark Allen, who later heard Adams recall the experience.

Adams saw that the rock formations jutting above the water also continued deep below, providing a diver with lots of nooks and crannies to explore and aquatic life plenty of places to live. He also found that, because the shores of the lake were surrounded by rock cliffs and not sand or dirt, the wave action near the shores did not muddy the water. The underwater visibility, on good days, stretched to 20 feet and beyond. And because the dam was constantly pulling the coldest water from the bottom of the lake, the lake maintained a comfortable temperature.

The Army Corps of Engineers might have intended to build a flood control dam but, Adams discovered, it inadvertently ended up creating a scuba diver's playground.

Adams sensed a business opportunity and, while still working as a state trooper, opened "Sarge's Dive Shop" in a garage on U.S. Route 119. He and his sons began offering classes and outfitting fellow divers.

If divers want lots of visibility, it's best to avoid the lake right after it fills up to its summer pool level in May. By mid-June things have cleared up a bit, and the conditions persist through August, when the Army Corps of Engineers begins drawing the lake down for Gauley Season.

MARK ALLEN

The Little Bahamas

Allen showed up at Sarge's in 1979. Then 24 years old, he'd been obsessed with scuba diving since he was in seventh grade. He would rush home from school to catch reruns of Sea Hunt, which starred Lloyd Bridges as a scuba diving, crime fighting former U.S. Navy frogman.

There was nowhere to learn to dive in Allen's native Moorefield, however, and his parents weren't crazy about the idea anyway. But by 1979, Allen was teaching high school science at Midland Trail High School, just a 20-minute drive from Summersville. He took diving classes from a guy in Oak Hill named Cooter. On the day he completed his certification, Allen drove straight to Sarge's to buy a set of diving gear. He kept taking classes until he was a master diver and began teaching classes and working at Sarge's shop over the summers. The dive shop eventually moved from the garage to a spot near the lake marina. Allen and his brother Eric bought the place in 1990 when Adams retired. Since then they have welcomed divers from all over the United States, who come to the lake to see why *Skin Diver* magazine once dubbed Summersville "the Little Bahamas of the East."

Mike Nadler started going to the lake regularly after he opened Divehards International, his Pittsburgh-based diving instruction company. "It's a little hike, but well worth my time."

He says his students appreciate the wealth of hotel, camping, and dining options in the area. But the lake is the main attraction. "The biggest thing for me is, it's warm and relatively good visibility," Nadler says. The variety of depths available also make it a great place to safely train beginning divers.

There's only one downside. "It's sort of hard to explain why you don't start your diving earlier," he says. Since Summersville Lake is a flood control dam—filled to 300 feet each spring and drawn down to about 230 feet each fall—conditions aren't right for diving until around mid-June, and scuba diving trips have to stop around the beginning of September.

It's just part of doing business for Nadler, but he says it sometimes leads to confused calls from customers. "What do you mean they're filling the lake?"

A Legacy of LEARNING

West Virginia's historically black colleges and universities have helped to shape the world.

WRITTEN BY **PAM KASEY**

It wasn't enough just to free the slaves, it quickly became apparent after the Civil War. There had to be pathways for freedmen and freedwomen to become full participants in society. Colleges dedicated to the education of black Americans were a critical part of the solution.

A few black colleges operated already before the war. But dozens were established after 1865 to serve the newly freed slaves and their families—some with federal backing, and many through affiliation with the African Methodist Episcopal and other churches.

"The original purpose was to educate African Americans really in two main subjects: teaching and nursing," says Anthony L. Jenkins, president of West Virginia State University, one of West Virginia's two remaining Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). "The actual push was to educate African American women before African American men, and those were heavily female-dominated work environments or careers even then."

Here is a look at three of West Virginia's HBCUs, past and present, and some of the world-changing men and women who emerged from their halls.

Students on the steps of Storer College, undated.

COURTESY OF WEST VIRGINIA STATE ARCHIVES

Storer College (1867–1955)

After the Civil War ended in 1865, Nathan Cook Brackett of the U.S. Christian Commission set up schools in the Potomac region of the Virginias to educate freed slaves. His teachers were missionaries from the Northeast, but it would make more sense, he realized, to train and employ black teachers for the task. With the backing of Maine philanthropist John Storer and the Free Will Baptist Society, Brackett established Storer Normal School in Harpers Ferry. It occupied the Lockwood House and other former armory structures.

Located at the site of abolitionist John Brown's raid on a U.S. armory, Storer Normal School, later Storer College, held a unique place among black colleges. The escaped slave-turned-social reformer Frederick Douglass served as a Storer trustee and delivered a famous speech about John Brown on campus in 1881. An early meeting of the Niagara Movement, forerunner to the NAACP, took place on campus in 1906.

Storer became a four-year college in 1938 but was never accredited. When the Supreme Court ended school segregation in 1954 with *Brown v. Board of Education*, the state of West Virginia withdrew support for the college. It closed in 1955.

Storer's campus became part of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park and may be visited there today.

NOTABLE STORER COLLEGE ALUMNI

J.R. Clifford (1875) became the first black lawyer in West Virginia. He fought for civil rights both as a lawyer and in his weekly *Pioneer Press*, one of the most widely circulated African American newspapers in the country.

Coralie Franklin Cook (1880), the first known college graduate among descendants of Thomas Jefferson's slaves at Monticello, became a distinguished professor of elocution at Howard University and was active in the women's suffrage movement.

Nnamdi Azikiwe (1927), an advocate of Nigerian and African nationalism, became the first president of Nigeria in 1963.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The original Mahood Hall burned in 1937. West Hall was a men's dormitory when Bluefield was a residential college. Bluefield Colored Institute class of 1905. Virginia Clark Hebert, class of 1932.

COURTESY OF BLUEFIELD STATE COLLEGE

Bluefield State College (1895–present)

Black Americans migrated by the thousands in the decades after the Civil War to work in West Virginia's Southern coalfields. In 1895, the West Virginia Legislature established the Bluefield Colored Institute to educate blacks in the region.

Like many other black colleges, Bluefield started primarily as a teaching institute—it was renamed Bluefield State Teachers College in 1929. The name changed again in 1943 to Bluefield State College to recognize its expansion into a broader curriculum.

Brown v. Board of Education led to diversification of the student body and faculty. Tensions flared in the 1960s as white enrollment grew and the college's first white president appointed only white faculty. When a bomb tore through the campus gym in 1968, the president closed the dormitories for good, transforming the college to a commuter-only campus.

Today, Bluefield State serves students at two campuses: the original campus in Bluefield and a satellite campus in Beckley. Its enrollment stands at about 1,360 and it grants several hundred associate's and bachelor's degrees every year.

NOTABLE BLUEFIELD STATE COLLEGE ALUMNI

Maceo Pinkard (1913) was a renowned composer, bandleader, lyricist, and music publisher. Among his many songs, "Sweet Georgia Brown" was widely recorded and became the theme song of the Harlem Globetrotters.

Elizabeth Drewry (1933) became in 1950 the first black woman elected to the West Virginia Legislature. Along with other advocacy, she introduced legislation in 1955 that allowed women to serve on juries, bringing West Virginia into line with the rest of the nation on gender and jury service.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Cap and gown portrait in front of Ferrell Hall, 1930s. WVSU's aviation program produced several Tuskegee Airmen; these two photos are from the 1940s. The college started integrating in the 1950s.

West Virginia State University (1891–present)

The second Morrill Act of 1890 required states to either show that race was not an admissions criterion at their land grant colleges or establish separate institutions for black students. In response, West Virginia established the West Virginia Colored Institute in 1891. It offered the equivalent of a high school education as well as vocational training and teacher preparation. It later offered college degrees and, after achieving accreditation, became West Virginia State College in 1929.

State integrated quickly following *Brown v. Board of Education*: Five years later the student population was less than half black, and 10 years later it was less than a quarter black.

As one of 19 land grant HBCUs across the nation, State has the same teaching, research, and extension mission as West Virginia University. "We have 38 extension programs throughout West Virginia," President Jenkins says. "We help annually over 20,000 West Virginians—whether it's dealing with livestock, growing crops, nutrition, health, wellness, all of those things."

Granted university status in 2004, WVSU has more than 3,500 students and awards more than 400 bachelor's and master's degrees each year. "We are a public, land grant, historically black institution that has evolved over the years as a fully accessible, racially integrated, multigenerational institution with over 22 nations represented," Jenkins says, "a living laboratory of human relations. I see us as a university of national distinction that helps students find their passion—and we've done that for 126 years."

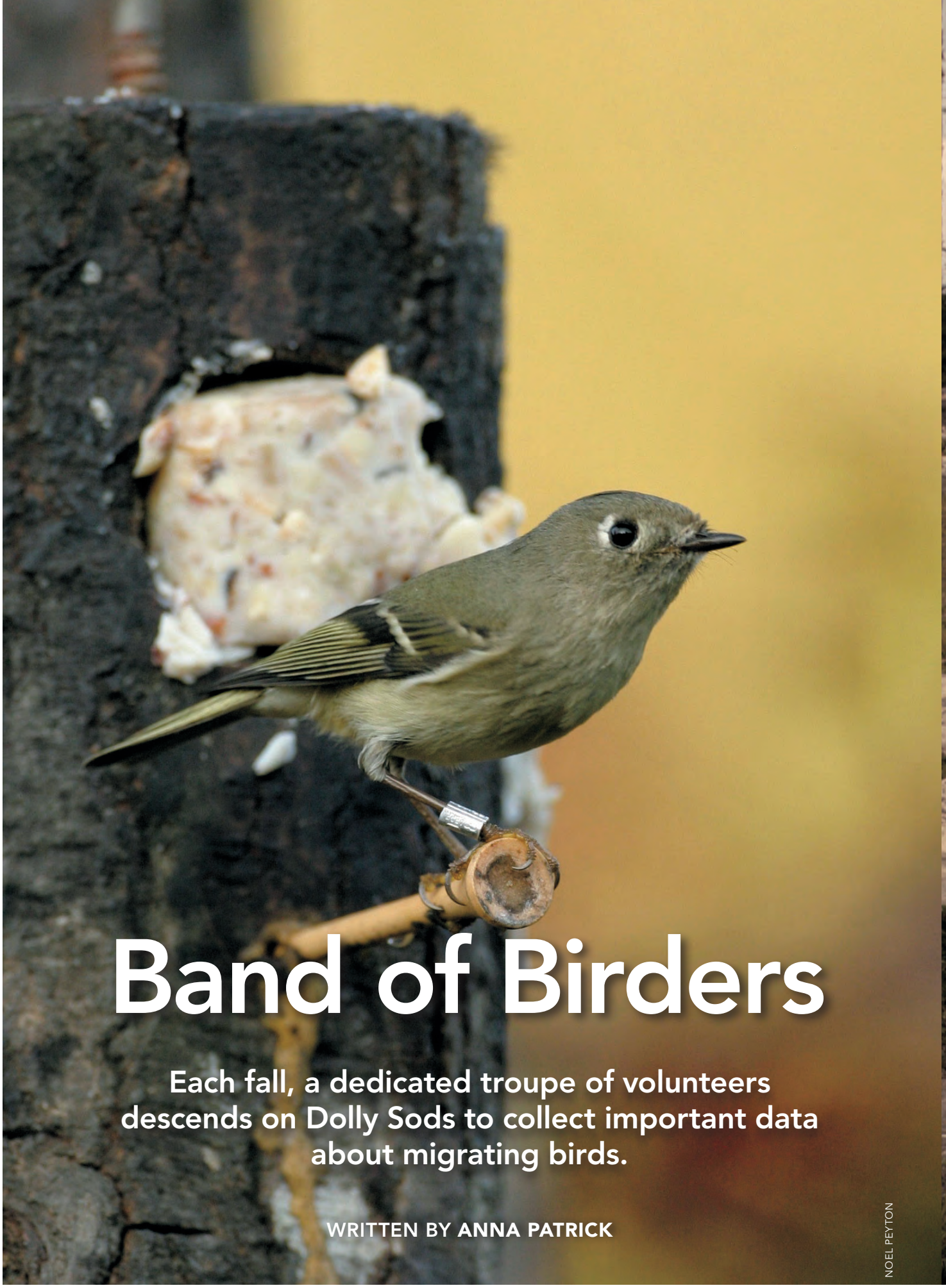
COURTESY OF WEST VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

NOTABLE WEST VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI

Katherine Coleman Goble Johnson (1937), "The Human Computer," was among the women mathematicians employed by NASA's predecessor organization. She calculated trajectories for the earliest American space flights. In 2015 she received the nation's highest civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, from President Barack Obama. She was a central figure in the 2016 film *Hidden Figures*.

Judge Damon J. Keith (1943), has served on the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals since 1977. Among his landmark cases is his earlier 1972 *U.S. v. U.S. District Court* ruling that forced Attorney General John Mitchell to release transcripts of illegal wiretaps. The Nixon administration appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, which upheld what has come to be known as "the Keith decision." Keith's many distinctions include the NAACP's highest award, the Spingarn Medal.

Earl Lloyd (1950) was, as a member of the Washington Capitols, the first black player to play in a National Basketball Association game—just one of the racial barriers the top defensive player broke. He was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 2003.



Band of Birders

Each fall, a dedicated troupe of volunteers descends on Dolly Sods to collect important data about migrating birds.

WRITTEN BY **ANNA PATRICK**

NOEL PEYTON

COURTESY OF JOAN BELL PATTISON

RIGHT Allegheny Front Migration Observatory founder Ralph Bell with wife Betty at Dolly Sods in 1969.

LEFT This ruby-crowned kinglet, banded at AFMO in West Virginia, was photographed in Slidell, Lousiana.

Ralph Bell was flat on his back, his eyes scanning the sky.

He had been catching birds in the Red Creek Campground at the Dolly Sods Wilderness, recording each bird's sex and age and placing a small band containing a unique set of numbers, like a Social Security number, around each bird's leg before setting it free. The numbers served as an individual identification system—if a banded bird was recaptured by a different banding station or reported by an average citizen, ornithologists would be able to learn about its migration patterns.

After five years of running his bird-banding operation from the campground, Bell could tell that, for all the migrating birds he caught, many more were flying over his makeshift research center. He could tell they were headed southwest but couldn't figure out how to get to them.

So, one day, he stopped what he was doing. He got on the ground, lay on his back, and looked up at the sky. He watched the warblers and the thrushes overhead. He watched the hawks flying south. He looked for patterns in their flight.

Eventually, he rose, walked across the campground parking lot, and followed a narrow deer path out to the edge of the mountain. That's where he saw them: dozens and dozens of birds funneling through a natural opening in the mountain ridge.

On their migration path, the birds would fly along the Allegheny mountain range, which runs east to west, before cutting through the mountain's opening to continue heading south. Bell could see that that opening, which formed a natural bowl at the rim of the mountain located in Grant County, was where he needed to be. So, in 1963, having launched the bird banding operation in 1958, Bell moved the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory (AFMO) from the Red Creek Campground to that opening he discovered along the little deer path.

It's been six decades since Bell started catching and banding a sample of the birds migrating south over Dolly Sods. He didn't know it at the time, but from his little patch in the Alleghenies, Bell was founding what would become the oldest continuously running bird banding station in North America.

★ ★ ★

After his sixth grade teacher introduced him to birds, Todd Schnopp started carrying his dad's old binoculars around on the family farm. With a bird book sticking out of the back of his pants, the 12-year-old would walk around his farm, seeing if he could identify any of the birds tucked in the trees.

That same year, Schnopp visited the AFMO for the first time. His sixth-grade teacher took him. The boy watched as volunteers carefully picked up birds that had flown into one of the observatory's nets running along the mountain's rim. He saw them place the birds in brown paper bags to keep them calm. Runners would then walk the birds to the banding station, a temporary structure volunteers put up every year.

The AFMO catches its birds using large nets spanning 6, 9, and 12 feet in length. Volunteers pluck the birds from the nets and attach a number band to one leg before releasing them back into the sky.

JOAN BELL PATTISON

Standing quietly off to the side, Schnopp's face lit up with excitement the first time he saw a bird bander pull an animal from a bag just feet away. Getting to see a Swainson's thrush or a black-throated blue warbler up close was so different from seeing it through his binoculars. "You get to see things you never see when they're in a tree," Schnopp says. "Like their brilliant color."

It took years of showing up and watching before Bell started teaching Schnopp how to remove birds from the nets. Once he reached his 20s and "lost sight of what was real for a while," as Schnopp puts it, he stopped making the regular trip to Dolly Sods. When he eventually returned, Bell's daughter Joan Bell Pattison was in charge and didn't know who Schnopp was, so he had to start all over again—visiting the AFMO every chance he could, standing off to the side and observing, and returning again and again to show he was someone who could be trusted.

Schnopp, now 50, has his master bander's license and is co-leader of the station's operations with Bell Pattison. He often gets the pleasure of pulling a bird out of a bag and watching as visitors light up, just like he did as a child.

When the banding program started, its original intention was to track migration patterns. Now the data

When AMFO founder Ralph Bell met people that he could tell shared a passion for birds and the outdoors, he used to say: "They have the fire."

JOAN BELL PATTISON

The AFMO is now the oldest continuously running bird banding station in North America.

is being used to help ornithologists learn about the longevity of species, population changes, feeding behavior, movement patterns of hunted species, and more.

Anywhere from 3,000 to 10,000 birds fly into the AFMO's nets each year. In 2016, volunteers banded a total of 5,423 birds covering 77 species. Every year, after all the birds have been logged and numbers totalled, Bell Pattison submits the data to the U.S. Geological Survey's Bird Banding Laboratory, which oversees the North American Bird Banding Program from the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland.

The operation depends on a squad of about 25 volunteers each year. "We have so many that want to volunteer," Bell Pattison says. "It's difficult to tell people 'No.' The way I do it is, we just watch for years. People come up there for years. And you know who's really interested and who you can count on."

★ ★ ★

Volunteering at the AFMO isn't an easy job. Once the station opens in the middle of August, it doesn't close until the beginning of October. Volunteers wake up before dawn every day to unroll the nets and prepare for the birds to start passing through. The observatory needs people who are prompt, committed to keeping the birds safe, and dedicated to learning—it takes years to learn how to properly identify birds before volunteers can receive their master bander's licenses.

Sheila Berry and her husband, Jeff, never intended to be bird banders. They just happened upon the AFMO one September during a romantic two-week vacation at the Red Creek Campground before getting married in a private ceremony in Dolly Sods. "It was just going to be the two of us and our dog," Sheila says. Instead, their wedding was attended by their dog Oreo and a dozen of their new bird-banding friends.

Jeff and Sheila returned to the Red Creek Campground each year to celebrate their anniversary. Year after year, they would wake up with the sun to watch their bird-banding friends work. They would ask questions and maybe get to hear a songbird's heartbeat.

Finally, after eight or nine years of camping along Red Creek, waiting for the sun to rise and the birds to come, Sheila and Jeff finally heard the question they'd been waiting for: "Would you like to learn how to help?"

The Berrys now save up all their vacation time so they can volunteer with the AFMO. They camp at the Red Creek Campground the entire month and serve as the observatory's station managers.

"We never thought we'd be getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning on our vacation," Sheila says. "But it is so worth it to go up and hold a bird in your hand that you know in a matter of days will be in Argentina or the Caribbean."

JOAN BELL PATTISON

August Events 800.CALL.WVA

gotowv.com | wvstateparks.com/calendar.html

AUGUST 1–5
Pickin' in Parsons
Five River Campground
Parsons
304.478.3515

AUGUST 2
"Wings of Wonder," Birds of Prey
Lost River State Park
Mathias
304.897.5372

AUGUST 3–5
21st Annual Blackberry Festival
Clarksburg City Park
304.622.3206

Eight Rivers Quilting Party
McClintic Library
Marlinton
304.799.6122

AUGUST 4
Mountain State Cruisers Classic Car Show
Berkeley Springs State Park
Berkeley Springs
304.258.5660

AUGUST 4–5
Blenko Festival of Glass
Blenko Glass Company
Milton
877.425.3656

AUGUST 4–6
5th Annual Peach Festival
Romney
304.822.7477

AUGUST 5
Gritty Chix Mud Run
ACE Adventure Resort
Minden
877.787.3982

Terror of the Tug
Pipestem Resort State Park
Pipestem
304.466.1800

Treasure on the Mountain
Snowshoe Mountain Resort
Snowshoe
304.572.5671

AUGUST 5–6
Captain Thurmond 28.5 Mile Triathlon
Fayetteville
304.663.2302 or 304.640.8161

AUGUST 6, 13, 20
Kayak Instruction and Tour the Lake
Beech Fork State Park
Barboursville
304.528.5794

AUGUST 7–12
Mason County Fair
Pt. Pleasant
304.675.5463

AUGUST 10–19
West Virginia State Fair
Fairlea
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AUGUST 11–12
Blues, Brews, and BBQs Festival
Snowshoe Mountain Resort
Snowshoe
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AUGUST 12
Insect Walk with Sue Olcott
WV Botanic Garden
Morgantown
304.322.2093

Mountain Trail Challenge Half Marathon & 5K Run
Watoga State Park
Marlinton
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Rails & Ales Festival
Harris Riverfront Park
Huntington
304.696.5990

Storyteller Bill Lepp
Beech Fork State Park
Barboursville
304.528.5794

AUGUST 17
Brunch with Margaret Blennerhassett
Blennerhassett Island State Park
Parkersburg
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AUGUST 16–19
Summerfest
South Charleston
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AUGUST 18–20
5th Annual West Virginia Tattoo Expo
Morgantown Event Center
Morgantown
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AUGUST 19
Family Fireworks Adventure
Blennerhassett Island State Park
Parkersburg
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AUGUST 19–20
Pro Watercross National Championship
Magic Island
Charleston
304.344.5075

AUGUST 22–26
Doddridge County Fair
West Union
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AUGUST 23–26
Frontier Days
Shinnston
304.592.5631

AUGUST 25–27
31st Annual VIPP Picnic
Blackwater Falls State Park
Davis
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Downtown Beckley
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Mt. Nebo
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Beverly Heritage Center
Beverly
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The Van-Dells
Pipestem Resort State Park Amphitheater
Pipestem
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AUGUST 26–27
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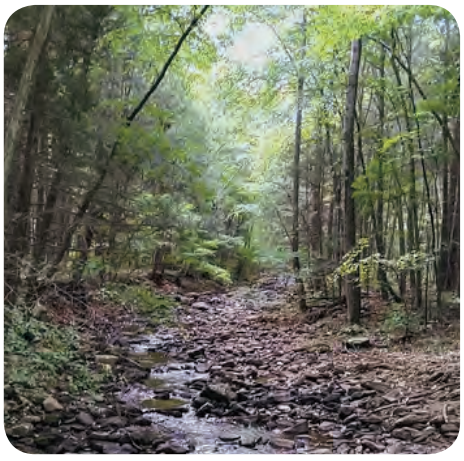
LEFT TO RIGHT Blackwater Falls State Park photo by Amanda Tinney; foggy New River Gorge Bridge in Fayetteville photo by Eric Mitchell; Coopers Rock State Park overlook photo by Amber Balsinger; Mercer County sunset photo by Michael Barton; cottage in Harpers Ferry photo by Cindi Dunn; snail in Preston County photo by Lori Turner; Hawks Nest State Park overlook photo by Olivia Cait; ruby-throated hummingbird in Lost River photo by Jon Howard; West Virginia State Fair in Fairlea photo by Kevin Jack; Spruce Pine Hollow Park in Hedgesville photo by Katie Richard; riding bikes on the West Fork River Trail in Marion County photo by Don Dequasie. *Photos published at editor's discretion.*



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ON THE COVER Bald eagles, photographed by Steve Shaluta Photography, *steveshaluta.com*

THIS PAGE Yellow warbler in Logan County photographed by Tessa Nickels, *flickr.com/photos/tessanickels*

MARCH

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Bumblebee. Photo by Josh Shackleford Photography
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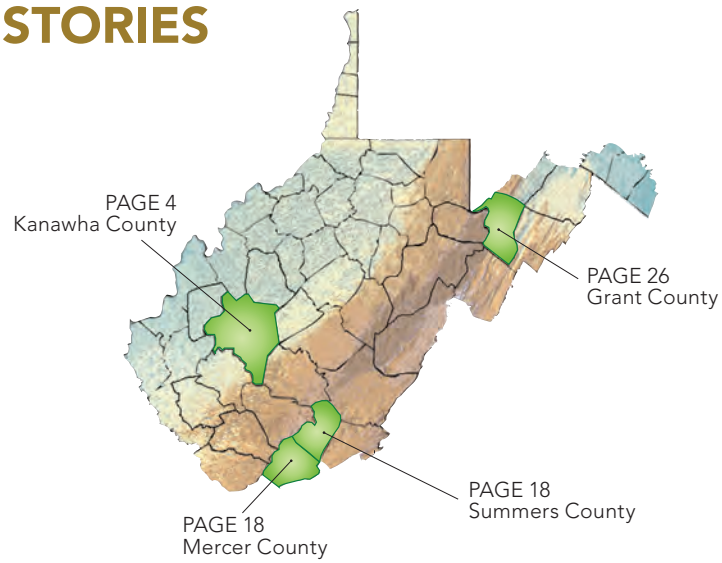

West Virginia
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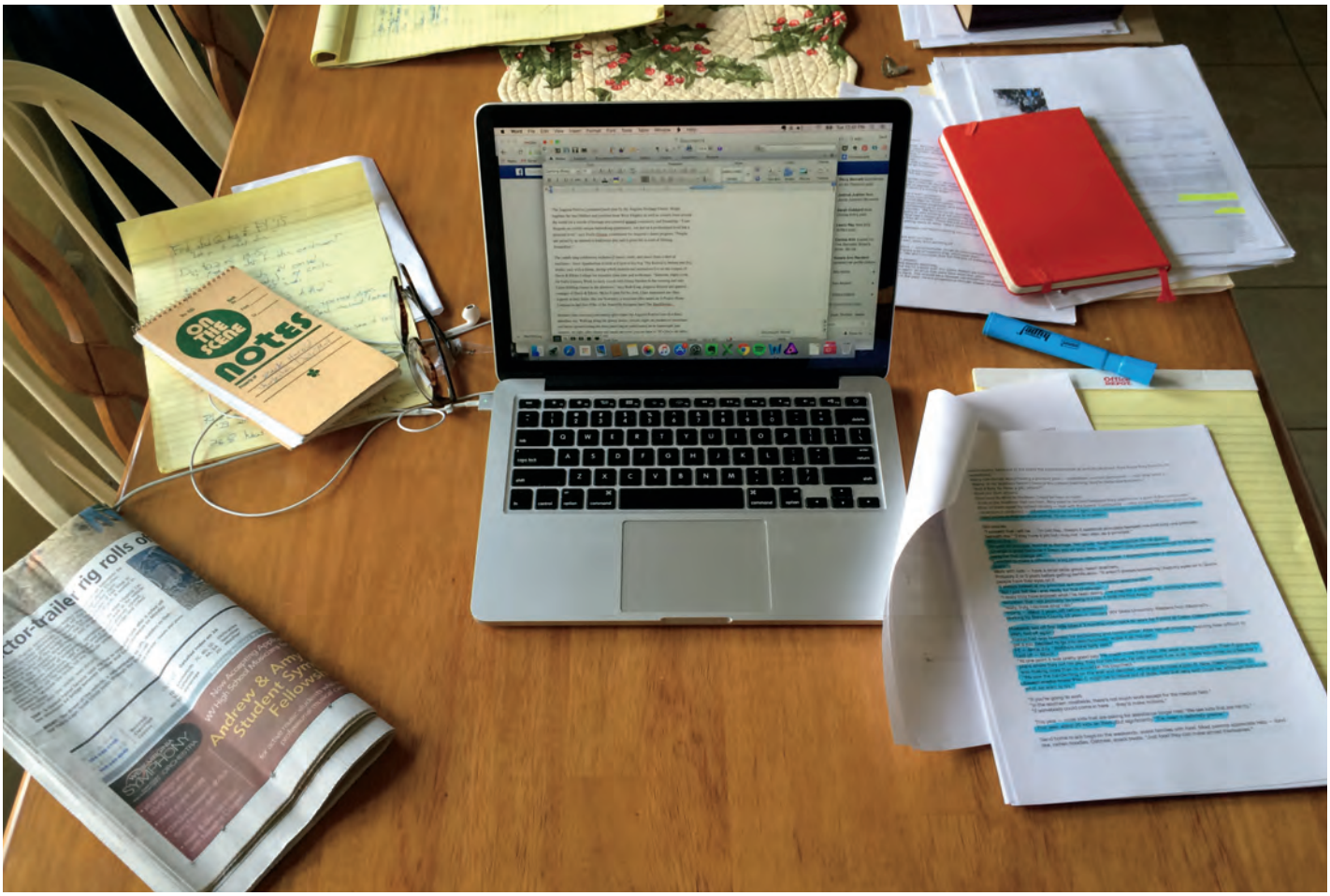


I did not get into journalism because I enjoy writing. There's a lot of truth in the old saw about authors who "hate writing, but love having written." Crafting a good story is the most mentally draining experience I've ever had. Every word presents a new problem. Each new sentence has the potential to ruin my whole day.

Here's what really attracted me to this stressful and much-maligned profession: access. Reporters are allowed to be nosy. You're allowed to ask questions that, in any other context, would be considered rude. You're allowed to go places you would otherwise never see. People let you into their offices, into their homes, into their most personal thoughts. It's exciting and humbling. It's also incredibly addictive.

I got my first taste of this when I was still in high school, writing for the *Charleston Gazette*'s FlipSide program, which gave teenagers a whole page in the Saturday newspaper. On a whim, I applied for press credentials for a drag race in Bristol, Tennessee. To my surprise, I was approved. They gave me a lanyard and a very official-looking badge and, before I knew it, I was standing beneath the light tree with my notepad and Kodak digital camera as dragsters peeled off the starting line. I've been hooked ever since.

I had another of those only-in-journalism moments while putting together this month's issue. I got to visit the old Memorial Tunnel in eastern Kanawha County. I've driven past it many times but, since it closed to the public about a month before I was born, I've never been inside it. The tunnel is now used for emergency training for military personnel and first responders. Members of the public aren't generally allowed inside. Unless, of course, you're a reporter.

It was fascinating to learn about all the trainings that take place in that burrow beneath Paint Creek Mountain. But the thing that impressed me most was how the West Virginia National Guard took an asset that seemed no longer useful and, with a little creativity, gave it a brand new life.

To me, it's a quintessential West Virginia story. We've always had to be a resourceful people. Instead of looking for something new and shiny, West Virginians are masters at taking what we already have and finding a new use for it.

Carlee Lammers' story on page 26 follows a similar thread. Back in the 1950s, the staff at the Petersburg State Trout Hatchery in Grant County realized one of their rainbow trout had an odd, gold coloring. Recognizing an opportunity, they selectively bred that fish to create the golden rainbow trout. Now those fish will be released into waters all over the state as part of April's inaugural Gold Rush.

It's finding these kinds of stories that keeps me excited about journalism. So, whenever I'm stuck at my kitchen table fretting over words that just won't seem to go together, I remind myself that I'll soon be back in the field meeting people, asking questions, and learning new things. Thank you, dear reader, for letting me do that for a living.

Until next time,

ZACK HAROLD, Managing Editor
wonderfulwv@newsouthmediainc.com

Follow me on:
Instagram: zack.harold

Zack Harold is a southern West Virginia native. He covered education, health, and government at the *Charleston Daily Mail* before becoming the newspaper's features editor. He joined New South Media in 2015, became managing editor of *WV Living* in January 2016, and took over as managing editor of *Wonderful West Virginia* in July 2016.

Carlee Lammers is a Maryland native and a graduate of West Virginia University. She moved to Charleston in May 2016, where she is a reporter at the *Charleston Gazette-Mail*. When she's not working, you'll find her running, trying new foods, or binge-watching her favorite shows on Netflix. She's passionate about exploring West Virginia and working with at-risk kids in the Mountain State.

After 15 years as a locomotive engineer, **Steve Shaluta** changed careers in 1985 devoting 29 years as a photographer for West Virginia Tourism. His images have been featured in countless publications. Steve retired in 2015 and now travels and focuses on wildlife photography full time. *steveshaluta.com*

As a senior writer for University Relations at West Virginia University since 2011, **Jake Stump** helps tell the story of "Mountaineer Nation." In a former life, he was a newspaper reporter for the *Charleston Daily Mail* and *The* (Morgantown, West Virginia) *Dominion Post*. He also has a master's degree in sociology and co-wrote a children's book.

LOCOMOTIVE MEMORIES

Your article "Steam in Their Blood" (December '17) brought back many early childhood memories of the timber community of Three Forks of Williams River, where I was born in 1929. My dad had been a fireman on one of the Shay steam locomotives at Three Forks before he and mom were married at Richwood in 1926. Dad took his bride to Three Forks, where they set up housekeeping in one of the shanty cars. Mom became the community postmistress.

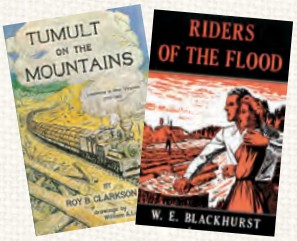
A model of a Shay steam locomotive, built by my father, is on display at the B&O Railroad Museum in Martinsburg. WANDA GILES HIGH, Winchester, VA, by mail

PRETTY AS A PICTURE

I am a Charleston native and longtime subscriber of the magazine. I have written about the Babcock Mill and thought that it was a great painting on the cover until I noticed that it was actually a photograph. Either way, it is a beautiful cover. STAN COHEN, Missoula, MT, via email

Write to us! We would love to hear from you. Send your comments to 709 Beechurst Avenue, Suite 14A, Morgantown, WV 26505 or email us at *wonderfulwv@newsouthmediainc.com*.

WEST VIRGINIA BOOKSHELF



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by Harry Lynch

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Few places are more passionate about hot dogs than West Virginia. We like our buns steamed, our chili smooth, our onions finely chopped and, most of all, we like our dogs topped with creamy coleslaw. This book doesn't stop at West Virginia–style hot dogs, however. With recipes for chili, toppings, and side dishes, you'll be ready for company whether you want to cook dogs Chicago-style for two, Coney Island-style for 20, or West Virginia-style for 90.

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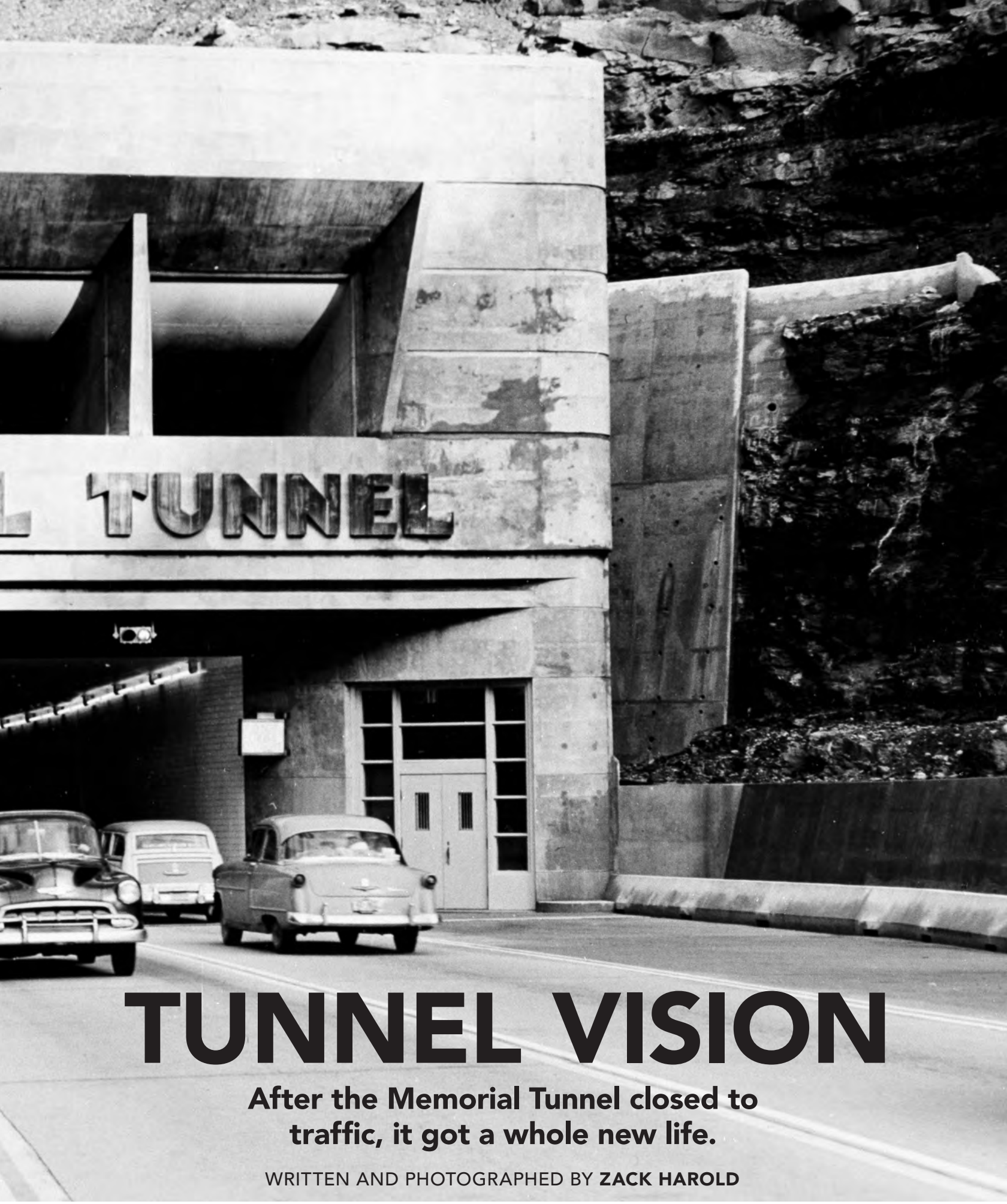
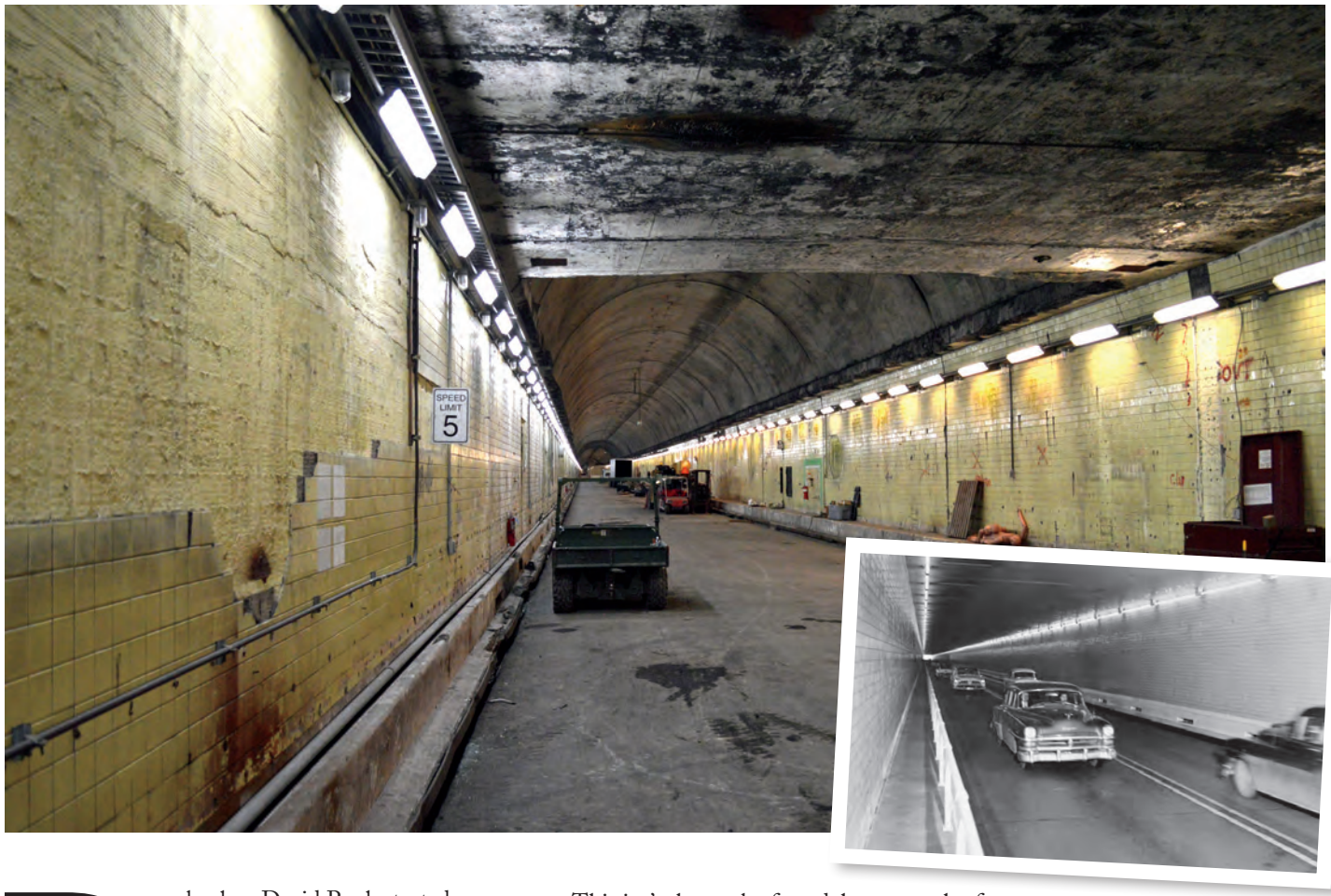


TUNNEL VISION

After the Memorial Tunnel closed to traffic, it got a whole new life.

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY **ZACK HAROLD**



The Memorial Tunnel in eastern Kanawha County doesn't look quite the same as when it first opened in the 1950s.

COURTESY OF WEST VIRGINIA STATE ARCHIVES

Back when David Pugh started working for the West Virginia Parkways Authority in the early 1980s, he'd spend several days each month flagging traffic at the Memorial Tunnel in Standard. Every few weeks, maintenance crews had to scrub exhaust buildup from the tunnel's ceiling and yellow-tiled walls using a big machine that looked like a street sweeper turned on its side. "It usually took them two days to scrub one lane," says Pugh, who is now a roadway manager with the Turnpike.

The tile was state-of-the-art when the tunnel opened in 1954, designed to be extra reflective so it would catch motorists' headlights. Generations of West Virginians stared out their car windows at the pale yellow grid. The tile in the tunnel became something like those "Welcome to West Virginia" signs at the state border—a signpost that you were a little bit closer to home.

It has now been more than 30 years since the tunnel was open to traffic, and the iconic tile has long since lost its lustre. On the tunnel's south end, much of it has fallen down. In places where it remains, the tile is covered in indecipherable spray paint graffiti. A little farther up, it's coated in a lumpy concrete-like substance. And at the tunnel's north end, the tile has been painted black.

This isn't the work of vandals or a result of neglect. These battle scars are just an indicator of the tunnel's new life as a training ground where military personnel, law enforcement, and first responders learn to save lives in some of the worst disasters imaginable.

Big Dig

From the beginning, the Memorial Tunnel was designed with safety in mind.

State lawmakers saw the need for a highway connecting northern West Virginia to the southern coalfields, allowing drivers to bypass some of the state's most treacherous roads. The Legislature approved funding in 1947 for a feasibility study for a four-lane highway stretching from Princeton, in Mercer County, all the way to Wheeling, in the Northern Panhandle.

Governor Okey Patteson then appointed a Turnpike Commission in 1949. Members quickly decided a four-lane would cost too much and shrunk the proposed road to a two-lane highway with a northern terminus in Fairplain, in Jackson County. But decisionmakers ruled that plan too costly as well, and designs were changed yet again. The West Virginia Turnpike would now run 88 miles from Princeton to Charleston.

But even this scaled-back project still had a major obstacle to overcome: Paint Creek Mountain.

MEMORIAL TUNNEL

Although the tunnel's south side is still visible from the West Virginia Turnpike, the north side is now hidden and is showing its age.

Construction of the Memorial Tunnel began in 1952. Workers moved 91,000 cubic yards of earth to build the 28-foot-wide, 25-foot-high, 2,800-foot-long tunnel, completing the project in just over two years for a price tag of $5 million.

It was a marvel of mid-century engineering. The lighting could be dimmed or brightened with the flip of a switch. There was an automatic ventilation system, with big fans at either end to pump exhaust fumes out of the tunnel. There was that specially designed reflective tile. And, perhaps most impressive, the tunnel was equipped with a closed-circuit television system, making it the first tunnel in the U.S. to be monitored by cameras.

The novelty eventually wore off. By the mid-1980s, the tunnel cost $500,000 a year to maintain. And because the rest of the turnpike had been expanded to four lanes, the two-lane tunnel created a bottleneck that often backed up traffic for miles. So the state set to work on a two-mile, four-lane, $35 million bypass to take traffic around Paint Creek Mountain.

The last car passed through the Memorial Tunnel on July 7, 1987. Parkways officials gave the honor to Tommy Graley, a turnpike maintenance worker who lived about a mile from the tunnel. He was accompanied by his wife Bonnie, daughters Connie and Angel, and a police escort. Not long after, Don Williams, a heavy equipment salesman from Virginia, led the first line of northbound traffic across the new bypass.

A few years after it was closed, engineers working on Boston's Big Dig tunnel project used the Memorial Tunnel to conduct fire tests—that's where the lumpy concrete covering some of the tile came from. Findings from those tests later informed the design of the Chunnel connecting the United Kingdom and France.

The tunnel was then used as storage for the West Virginia Parkways Authority. It seemed its useful life was over—until the West Virginia National Guard realized what could be done with a big, empty, subterranean space.

A New Lease on Life

In the early 2000s, with a growing threat of terrorism worldwide, military units and civilian emergency personnel began training to respond to chemical, biological, and nuclear threats. There weren't a lot of places to get that kind of training, however, so then–West Virginia National Guard Adjutant General Allen Tackett, who grew up not far from the Memorial Tunnel, suggested turning the old tunnel into a training complex.

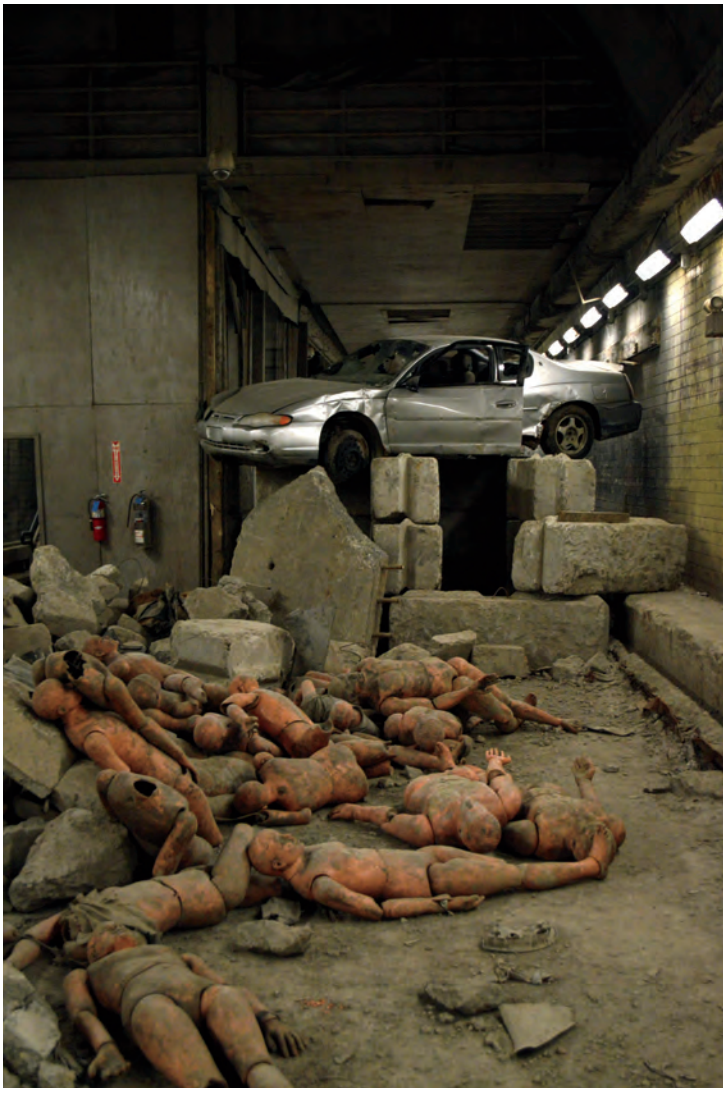
Tackett got some help from U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd, who in 2000 secured $5 million in U.S. Department of Defense funding for the project. The West Virginia Turnpike Authority then gave the National Guard a 50-year lease on the facility.

Now, nearly two decades later, the tunnel has hosted the U.S. Army Rangers, the U.S. Coast Guard, members of the New York City Fire Department, the Internal Revenue Service, the West Virginia

TOP: In addition to the facilities beneath the mountain, the Memorial Tunnel complex also features a helicopter landing pad and a steep hillside where first responders can practice car rescues. BOTTOM: The tunnel features a building with modular walls, allowing trainers to reset rooms for tactical maneuvers.

COURTESY OF THE WEST VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD

Clockwise from top right: An upside down car used for trainings, a mock post office complete with junk mail in the boxes, a recreated Afghan cave, a pile of mannequins outside the tunnel's collapse course, a mock chemical lab.



Among the Memorial Tunnel's training areas is a decommissioned Chicago subway car.

State Police, the West Virginia National Guard, and countless other groups.

A new group of trainees roll into the tunnel every few weeks. The trainings are customized for their exact needs. The tunnel is a blank canvas, allowing teams to construct just about any scenario they might encounter in the real world. They might rescue someone from a wrecked car or remove hazardous materials from a blue Volvo tractor trailer, secure the mock chemical lab after an explosion, or deal with a bomb threat in the pretend post office or train station. Trainees can even practice tactical maneuvers in a decommissioned Chicago subway car. "The only subway in West Virginia," quips Craig Mueller, the National Guard's operations manager at the Memorial Tunnel complex.

"They can turn the lights off and have nighttime training during the day," Mueller says. Trainers can add smoke or sound effects to make things more stressful. "I've been in here before when it looks like a zombie apocalypse," Mueller says.

When a special forces team was headed to Afghanistan, crews at the tunnel built a mock cave complex to mimic those used by the Taliban. But the most harrowing scenario is at the tunnel's northern end. It's a jungle of busted concrete, mangled cars, broken glass, metal shards, and snakes of rusty rebar, all meant to replicate a collapsed parking garage.

It's difficult to see until Mueller points it out, but there is a path through the wreckage. Trainees have to traverse the route—crawling through culverts and between small gaps in the concrete chunks—to rescue victims. It's a scary enough site with full lighting, but trainings here are often done in low light with smoke and sound effects pumped in. Actors are outfitted with prosthetic injuries and placed throughout the course to groan in pain and scream for help. It's as close to a real disaster as a training can get.

It's strange to think these nightmare scenarios are playing out just a few hundred yards from the Turnpike. As first responders pull survivors from the rubble or learn to diffuse a bomb or clean up spilled nuclear waste, people drive by, oblivious to what's happening just beneath Paint Creek Mountain.

No doubt, some of the passing motorists look over and admire the art deco lettering and American flag that still hang above the tunnel's closed mouth. Maybe they get nostalgic, remembering what it was like to drive through the tunnel on the way to a family vacation in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, or a school field trip at the Capitol in Charleston. Maybe there's a pang of sadness when they realize they'll never see that iconic yellow tile again.

Of course, the Memorial Tunnel is as alive as ever. And even if the drivers on the Turnpike don't realize it, the work that's going on beneath Paint Creek Mountain could one day save their lives.

Gallery

This might sting a little. This month, our photographers get up close and personal with bees and wasps.

Wasp

JOSH SHACKLEFORD, FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/ADVERTISINGWV

Yellow jackets

Sweat bee

JOSH SHACKLEFORD

Bumblebee

Carpenter bee

JOSH SHACKLEFORD

CARLA WITT FORD

Honey bees

Sweat bee

Wasp

JOSH SHACKLEFORD

Yellow jacket

Sweat bee

JOSH SHACKLEFORD

FLYING HIGH AGAIN

After decades of decline, bald eagles are back.

WRITTEN BY **JAKE STUMP**
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **STEVE SHALUTA**

RODNEY DAVIS

The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources asks bird watchers to report any bald eagle nests they find. See contact information on page 25.

Spotting a bald eagle soaring through the West Virginia skies a half-century ago would have been a rare spectacle. By the early 1980s, the bird was so scarce in West Virginia that the Division of Natural Resources reported only one bald eagle nest in the entire state, located in the Trough near Moorefield, Hardy County.

Back then, the United States' national symbol was on the verge of extinction. A variety of factors—ranging from the widespread use of pesticides to the logging industry to actual government-sponsored bounties on dead birds—led to dangerously low eagle populations.

But bald eagle populations have recovered, slowly and surely, thanks to wildlife preservation efforts and the banning of certain pesticides. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed the bird from its list of endangered and threatened wildlife in 2007.

To date the DNR has documented 86 bald eagle nests in West Virginia, says State Ornithologist Rich Bailey. "The number of active nests increases every year. The steady increasing trend—about five or 10 percent annually—shows no signs of abating," Bailey says.

While vultures hold their wings in a V shape and large hawks slightly raise their wings, bald eagles soar with their wings almost flat.

Learning from Our Mistakes

To understand the reemergence of the bald eagle, one must look at what led to its near demise.

There may have been as many as 100,000 nesting bald eagles in the nation when the Founding Fathers selected the bird to appear on the Great Seal of the United States in 1782. But by the 1950s, only around 400 nests were known.

Perhaps the greatest contributor to this decline was DDT, a popular pesticide widely used to kill common pests like lice and mosquitoes. "We started seeing wide use of DDT for insect control after World War II," says Jim Phillips, a retired naturalist who still monitors the birds through regular surveys at Pipestem Resort State Park. "The excess ended up being washed into the water systems. Smaller organisms took it in and they went up the food chain. Soon ospreys and pelicans and eagles were eating fish with high levels of DDT and were unable to raise babies."

Although DDT is not itself lethal to eagles, it disrupts the birds' calcium metabolism. The pesticide can make the birds sterile and cause females to lay unhealthy eggs with thin shells. These problems began to subside when the U.S. government banned DDT in the 1970s.

Compared to other states, West Virginia did not have a huge population of bald eagles to begin with. Eagles thrive in environments near water, and the lack of large fish-laden bodies of water kept the populations relatively low. The logging industry also may have driven wildlife away at the turn of the 20th century. "There was a big logging boom in West Virginia timber into the early 1900s," Bailey says. "There may have been a scarcity of suitable nest sites, since they usually nest in very large trees."

But now, many of those forests have grown back, and the state also has many more bodies of water. "We have the Ohio River and the New River, but once people added more ponds, lakes, and dams, that helped improve the eagle population throughout West Virginia," Bailey says.

And, up until a few decades ago, it wasn't uncommon for people to shoot eagles. Around the turn of the 20th century, state and federal agencies even offered hunters as much as $2 per bird because they were considered a nuisance to farms and livestock. The problem of human predation largely ended in 1973 when Congress enacted the Endangered Species Act. Bald eagles were among the first animals to be protected by the law.

EAGLE EYE

Pipestem Resort State Park will hold its 13th Winter Eagle Survey on March 3, 2018. To register, email or call Julie McQuade at *julie.a.mcquade@wv.gov* or 304.466.1800, or contact Wendy or Ron Perrone at Three Rivers Avian Center at *trac@tracwv.org* or 304.466.4683. Dress appropriately for the weather and take snacks and water and, if possible, binoculars.

From January to June, eagles are most commonly seen near places with large rivers and lakes.

Birds as Barometers

Nowadays, life is good for bald eagles in West Virginia. Food is abundant—the state's waterways are stocked with fish, and the birds often feed off of roadkill and deer carcasses.

Eagles are now found in many more places than to the Trough in Hardy County. From January to June, eagles stay within close proximity of water. "Nests started showing up along the Ohio River, from Huntington to Hancock County, and in the Eastern Panhandle," Bailey says. "The Cacapon and Potomac watersheds are great spots, and there's a sizeable population in the New River watershed."

During non-breeding season, it's not uncommon to see eagles all over the state, although sightings are a little more rare in coalfield counties. "The water quality for the birds is poor and there may not be a lot of good food or fishing for them," Bailey says.

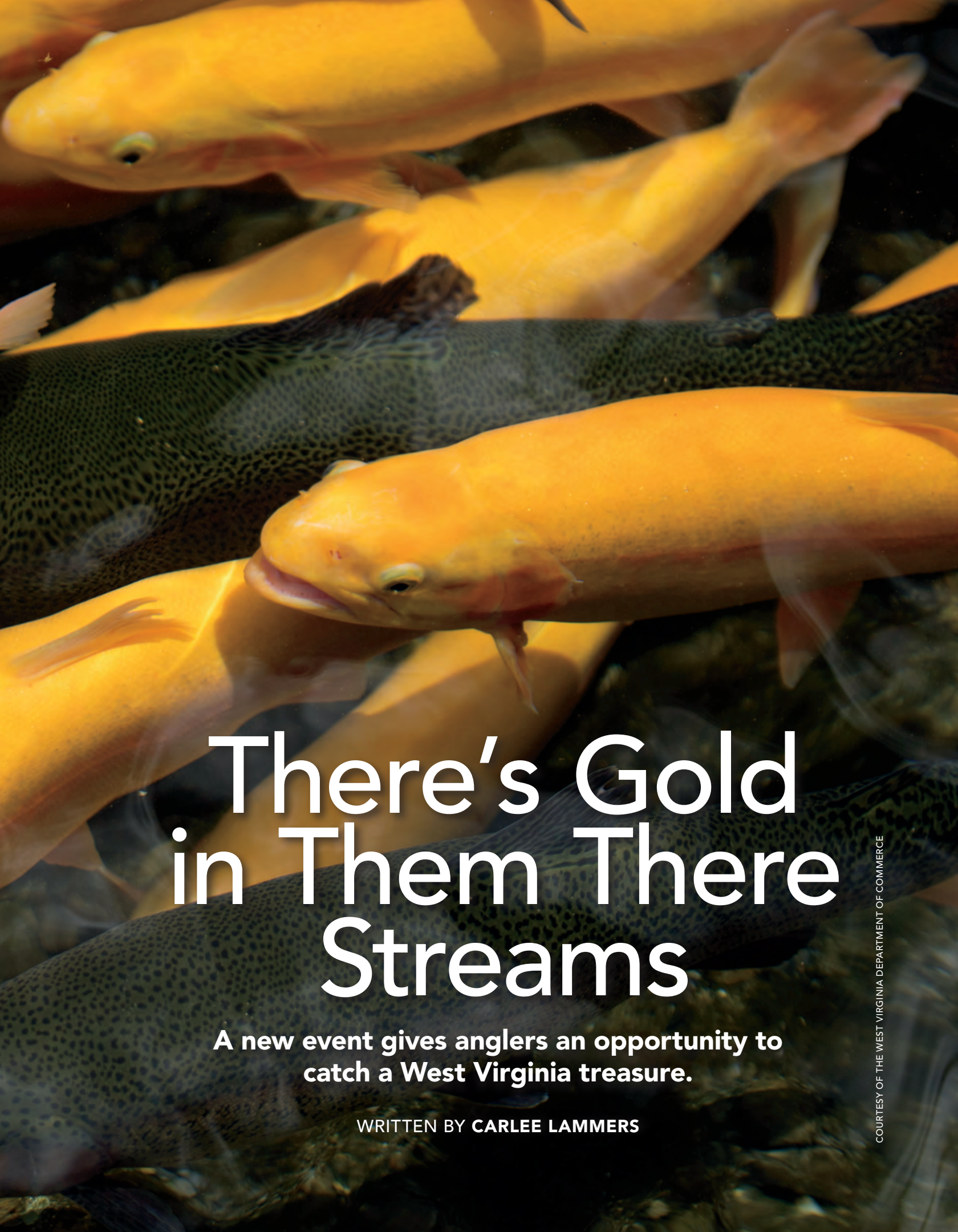
For Bailey, eagle gazing isn't quite the rare treat it used to be. "Encounters with the public are becoming more common," he says. "Although it's not the 'holy cow' moment it once was, an eagle sighting is still neat to see."

Bailey urges the public to report any eagle nest sightings to the DNR so it can monitor them. You can also join Phillips and other volunteers on their annual eagle surveys, one in January and one in March, in the Bluestone–New River area. "I still watch them and get excited," Phillips says. "I've seen many people become bird watchers just from their first sighting of an eagle."

But bald eagles' comeback isn't good news for just birders. Phillips says the vitality of the species says a lot about West Virginia as a whole.

"Birds are a barometer of the environment. If they're having trouble, what's bothering them will eventually bother people, too. You can judge the health of an environment by the birds."

If you spot a bald eagle nest, call 304.637.0245 or send the date, time, and location to: Wildlife Resources, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 67, Elkins WV 26241.



There's Gold in Them There Streams

A new event gives anglers an opportunity to catch a West Virginia treasure.

WRITTEN BY **CARLEE LAMMERS**

COURTESY OF THE WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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Any seasoned angler will tell you—land a West Virginia golden trout, and you've had a lucky day. This elusive, bright yellow color phase of the rainbow trout has become a prized catch in the Mountain State. Many people have been fishing their whole lives and have never caught one.

But this April, anglers will have a unique opportunity to strike gold when the state Division of Natural Resources releases nearly 25,000 golden rainbow trout in lakes, streams, and rivers from Barboursville to Berkeley Springs for the state's inaugural Gold Rush.

"Only one out of 10 trout is golden. It makes it pretty difficult to catch," says Jim Hedrick, Gold Rush organizer and manager of the DNR's Hatchery Program. "If you've never caught one and wanted to, here's your chance."

Striking Gold

The story of the golden trout begins in 1949, when the White Sulphur Springs Federal Hatchery sent the Petersburg State Trout Hatchery in Grant County a special gift: 10,000 young rainbow

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TOP The Bowden Hatchery in Randolph County.

BOTTOM Despite their unique coloring, golden trout are genetically identical to typical rainbow trout pictured here.

trout. Fewer than 300 of those trout survived, but the hatchery continued to breed the remaining fish, eventually establishing a good brood stock.

By 1955, hatchery staff noticed gold spots on a fish they nicknamed Little Camoflauge. Because of her unique color, former Petersburg Hatchery manager Vincent Evans moved Little Camoflauge to a separate rearing pond, where she continued to grow. More than a year later, her gold spots had turned into a band of golden scales.

Hatchery staff selectively bred Little Camoflauge and her offspring for several years, perfecting coloring of the fish and getting their size comparable to the rainbow trout. "I don't believe you'd ever see one of these formed in the wild on its own. I couldn't imagine that you would," says Jeff Williams, the current Petersburg hatchery manager. "We breed golden with golden and they produce golden fry. If you mix a rainbow in with the gold, they're really pale. They don't get the bright gold color. A true golden rainbow is really bright-colored."

A few years later, the hatchery decided it was time to introduce the golden rainbow to the public. The fish were stocked alongside regular rainbow trout in 1963, to commemorate West Virginia's centennial. The golden rainbow trout have remained a small part of the DNR's stocking efforts since then, at a ratio of one golden trout

A young angler struck gold at Spruce Knob Lake.

for every 9 rainbow trout. "Basically it's been a novelty ever since. Kids really like catching it because it's gold. It's special," Hedrick says.

Some anglers will tell you the fish don't bite as eagerly as the rainbow trout do, making them more difficult to catch. That might be a fish tale, however. Although they look quite different from their rainbow cousins, Williams says golden trout are genetically identical. "It's basically a variation in color caused by a pigment in the fish. They're not an albino or anything like that," he says. "It's just a different color."

A Golden Opportunity

Beginning the week after Easter, over two dozen public bodies of water will see more golden rainbow trout than ever before. "They are distributed the whole way across the state. We tried to make, as best we could, a Gold Rush stocking location as close to as many people as possible," Hedrick says.

The goal of this first-ever Gold Rush is to get families and young kids excited about the West Virginia golden rainbow trout and fishing in general. That's why officials planned the event with families in mind. The selected stocking locations have easy parking and are located near other accommodations. And the weeklong event will take place April 2–8, when many students will be on spring break. "The beauty of this is, when we go to a stream or a lake and we stock golden trout, you don't have to be there the same day," Hedrick says. "They're not going to catch them all."

You don't need a golden ticket to participate in the Gold Rush—if you're 15 or older, you only need a current West Virginia fishing license and a trout stamp.

For more information about the Gold Rush, including a complete list of locations and instructions for how to get a fishing license, visit *www.wvgoldrush.com*.

STRIKE GOLD

The Division of Natural Resources will stock only golden rainbow trout in a different location each day of April's Gold Rush. Stocking locations include:

- Barboursville Lake in Barboursville
- Bear Rock Lake near Valley Grove
- Berwind Lake in the Berwind Lake Wildlife Management Area near War
- The Blackwater River in Tucker County
- Boley Lake in Babcock State Park in Clifftop
- Cacapon Resort State Park in Berkeley Springs
- Cedar Creek State Park in Glenville
- Coopers Rock State Forest in Bruceton Mills
- The Cranberry River in Pocahontas County
- French Creek Pond at the West Virginia State Wildlife Center in French Creek
- Little Beaver State Park in Beaver
- Mason Lake in the Pedlar Wildlife Management Area in Western
- Mountwood Lake in Mountwood County Park near Deerwalk
- North Bend State Park Lake's tailwaters in Cairo
- Opequon Creek in Berkeley County
- Pendleton Lake at Blackwater Falls in Davis
- Pipestem Resort State Park in Pipestem
- R.D. Bailey Lake's tailwaters in Wyoming and Mingo counties
- Rollins Lake near Ripley
- Shavers Fork Upper and Lower Section in Randolph County
- South Branch (Smoke Hole) in Pendleton County
- Spruce Knob Lake in Riverton
- Stonewall Resort State Park in Roanoke
- Tomlinson Run State Park Lake in New Manchester
- Tygart Lake State Park in Grafton
- Wallback Lake in Clay County
- Warden Lake near Wardensville
- Watoga State Park in Marlinton

March Events 855.558.9152

gotowv.com | wvstateparks.com/calendar.html

MARCH 2
The Linsly Extravaganza
Capitol Theatre
Wheeling
304.233.4470

MARCH 2–3
Don Quixote
Charleston Civic Center Little Theater
Charleston
304.342.6541

MARCH 2–4
Homegrown Festival
Snowshoe Mountain Resort
Snowshoe
877.441.4386

MARCH 3
Eagle Survey
Pipestem Resort State Park
Pipestem
304.466.1800

Murder Mystery Dinner Theater
Tygart Lake State Park
Grafton
304.265.6144

Full Moon Hike
Cass Scenic Railroad State Park
Cass
304.456.4300

MARCH 3-4
WV Fishing, Hunting & Outdoor Sports Show
The Ruby Community Center at Mylan Park
Morgantown
304.288.4244

MARCH 7
Foreigner
WVU Creative Arts Center
Morgantown
304.293.7469

Harlem Globetrotters
Big Sandy Superstore Arena
Huntington
800.745.3000

MARCH 8
Five for Fighting with String Quartet
Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center
Huntington
304.696.6656

MARCH 9–11
Montani Semper Liberi – Music & Art at Oak Glen Festival
Oak Glen Little Theatre
New Cumberland
304.374.7474

Ballhooter Spring Break 2018
Snowshoe Mountain Resort
Snowshoe
877.441.4386

MARCH 10
Star Party
Green Bank Observatory
Green Bank
304.456.2150

MARCH 10–18
14th Annual Mid-Ohio Valley Heritage Quilt Show
Blennerhassett State Park Museum
Parkersburg
304.420.4800

MARCH 11
Bridgeport Farmers Market
Bridgeport Conference Center
Bridgeport
304.669.4340

MARCH 15
Casting Crowns
Big Sandy Superstore Arena
Huntington
800.745.3000

MARCH 16
Wheeling Symphony Presents "East Meets West"
Capitol Theatre
Wheeling
304.233.4470

MARCH 17
Carnegie Hall Gala
White Sulphur Springs
304.645.7917

The Junkyard
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West Virginia Ski Free Day
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877.441.4386

3rd Annual Mountain State Maple Day
Frostmore Farms
Dunmore
304.456.4331

MARCH 21
The Wizard of Oz
The Clay Center
Charleston
304.561.3570

MARCH 22
Kenny G
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304.561.3570

MARCH 23
Wycliffe Gordon & His International All Stars
WVU Creative Arts Center
Morgantown
304.293.4406

MARCH 23–25
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Capitol Theatre
Wheeling
304.233.4470

MARCH 30
Flashlight Egg Hunt
Blackwater Falls State Park
Davis
304.259.5216

MARCH 31
Traditional Easter Egg Hunt
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304.259.5216

Full Moon Hike
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WONDERGRAMS

Share your photos of West Virginia with us! Send Instagram-style photos to *wonderfulwv@newsouthmediainc.com* or use the hashtag #wondergrams on Instagram.

LEFT TO RIGHT Cacapon redbud photo by Elaine Clark; Marlinton train depot photo by Brent Schnupp; Dolly Sods Wilderness Area sunset photo by Thomas Dean; tree swing in Mercer County photo by Michael Barton; fishing on the Greenbrier River photo by Eric Wingler; clover in Braxton County photo by Denise Powers Fabian; Grave Creek Mound in Moundsville photo by Wes Philp; a sparrow in Marion County photo by Wendy Cutlip Parks; Albert Falls in Thomas photo by Amber Miller; Harpers Ferry Virginia bluebells photo by Cindi Dunn; Edray barn photo by Joe Brennskag. *Photos published at editor's discretion.*

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WV weddings

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

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ONE LOOK AT OUR COVER AND YOU KNOW THAT THIS ISSUE is packed with great ideas. Our cover bride, Emma Ervin, not only made her own wedding gown, but the thoughtful and personal details she worked into her décor are monumentally inspirational. I just wanted to see more and more photos. Tired of traditional aisle runners? Use antique rugs. Think vintage furnishings should only be used inside? Think again. Want a unique backdrop for photos? Plant a garden of towering sunflowers.

Emma Ervin and Samuel Boso aren't the only couple to step outside traditions. I just love that Barbara Lee Ford and Devin Judy hung vibrant antique quilts on the clothesline—what an awesome backdrop for photos. Jennifer Cooperrider and Comac Cosgrove's wedding at a conservatory in Columbus, Ohio, made me realize we need a similar venue in West Virginia. Hint, hint. The releasing of butterflies by Lauren Brown and Justin Hill, was a perfect addition to their garden party—themed wedding. Marry an Irishman or Scotsman, then incorpate kilts into the groomsmen's attire, of course. And who says that brides are the only ones who can change from wedding gown to reception gown to exit dress? In this issue, we had two grooms who went from black tuxedo jackets to white ones for the reception. Love that! And the list goes on and on.

But maybe my favorite spin on a time-tested tradition is the use of grandparents in lieu of flower girls or ring bearers. Lauren Brown and Justin Hill's grandmothers petalled aisle as flower girls, and McKenzie Emrick and Travis Huffman's great grandfather walked down the aisle announcing the bride wearing his military uniform. Aahhhhhhh. Sweet and sentimental. I wasn't even there and it brought tears to my eyes.

So to the couples in this issue, WOW, you made our hearts skip a beat!

Nikki

NIKKI BOWMAN, *Editor*

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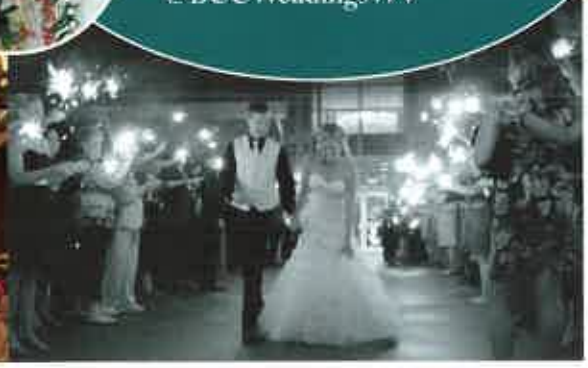

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COVER PHOTO
Emma Ervin & Samuel Boso were married at their family farm in Washington. *Photo by Liv Hefner Photography.*

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HANNAH HICKS

Hannah Hicks of Hannah Hicks Photography works to create classic and beautiful images while making her couples feel loved and well-served. She believes that the little in-between moments are special and aims to capture the authenticity of each love story that comes her way with hopes that every couple allows their wedding photographs to serve as reminders of their love.
hannahhicksphoto.com

THE OBERPORTS

The Oberports—Emily and Bobby—are a married photography team based in Charleston. They specialize in weddings, elopements, and portrait sessions. Inspired by beautiful light, genuine emotions, and old films, their work highlights personal connections and the gorgeous scenery of West Virginia. After nearly a decade of wedding experience, their couples know them as easygoing, professional, and experienced storytellers.
theoberports.com

JAMES CARL PHOTOGRAPHY

James Carl Photography is the international award-winning husband-and-wife duo of James and Ellie. Out of their studio located in the Centre Market district in Wheeling, they enjoy working with couples throughout West Virginia and in Pittsburgh and the surrounding states. Married for more than 17 years, they strongly believe in the power of the printed photograph and they love dramatic light, the timeless pose, and authentic moments.
jamescarlphotography.com

STACY SMITH EVANS

Stacy of Stacy Smith Evans Photography is a lifestyle portrait and wedding photographer based in northern Virginia. She captures authentic moments for her couples, often in nature and with vibrant colors, and continues to document life's milestones for them as their families grow.
stacysmithevansphotography.com

BRITTANY ANDERSON

Brittany Anderson Photography started in South Florida in 2011. Since then, Brittany has photographed hundreds of weddings all across the U.S. and Bahamas, winning multiple awards. She is now based out of Clarksburg, West Virginia where she lives with her husband and their son. Her photography style is photojournalistic, favoring real-life and candid moments. Her photographs are intended to bring back the authentic emotion that will last a lifetime.
brittanyandersonphotography.com

LIV HEFNER

Consumed by wanderlust, Liv loves to travel and photograph what she finds along the way. However, her heart for her home and her love of weddings always bring her back to the Mountain State. Liv is a wife, mom (to the human fur variety), daughter, teacher, and curator of soulful images. She loves being able to turn the emotion of love into a tangible heirloom through photography.
livhefnerphotography.com

Wedding *Wows!*

We share our favorites from this issue's submissions—from the best bouquets to our favorite cake topper. WOW!

best DÉCOR

Emma Ervin & Samuel Boso
photographed by Liv Hefner Photography

Top 10 Covers

The staff of WV Weddings *shares the beautiful photos we considered for this issue's cover. Here are the winner and top runners-up.*

Cover FINALISTS

1. *Emma Ervin & Samuel Boso, photographed by Liv Hefner Photography* **2.** *Lauren Brown & Justin Hill, photographed by Melissa Kincaid Photography* **3.** *McKinzi Straub & Nathan Weese, photographed by CP Imagery* **4.** *Chelsea Fisher & Nicholas Burdette, photographed by Callie Lindsey Photography* **5.** *Molly Seidler & Alexander Caughran, photographed by The Oberports* **6.** *Barbara Lee Ford & Devin Judy, photographed by The Oberports* **7.** *Brogan Walters & Daniel Fulks, photographed by Brittany Anderson Photography* **8.** *Kristen Frodelius & Nicholas DeMedici, photographed by Amberlee Christey Photography* **9.** *Angelina Angotti & Joshua Zontek, photographed by Brittany Anderson Photography* **10.** *Micah Ballard & Dillon Madden, photographed by Beth Forester*

most unique FAVORS

Morgan Richards & Michael Beals, photographed by Liz Jordan Photos

best groomsmen SHOT

Sarah White & John Lustrea, photographed by Stacy Smith Evans

best cake TOPPER

Lesley Taylor & Eric Weiss, photographed by Emily Ferguson Photography; Morgan Richards & Michael Beals, photographed by Liz Jordan Photos; Lauren Anna Johnson & Shawn Amory, photographed by The Oberports

best COUPLE SHOTS

LEFT TO RIGHT: *Claire Reece & Juan Quintero, photographed by Tim Ray Photography; Danica Kempinski & Adam Wilberger, photographed by ROGUE Film Co.; Lauren Anna Johnson & Shawn Amory, photographed by The Oberports; Carey Settle & Jared Proctor, photographed by Mark Webb Photography; Molly Seidler & Alexander Caughran, photographed by The Oberports; Chelsea Fisher & Nicholas Burdette, photographed by Callie Lindsey Photography; Quinn Edgell & Waylon Miller, photographed by Brittany Anderson Photography; Natalie Aliff & Brendan Foley, photographed by The Oberports*

most unique DETAIL

Paige Lavender & Nicholas Ward, photographed by The Oberports

best attendant SHOT

CLOCKWISE: Meredith Orndorff & William Bresinski, photographed by Claire Watson Photography; Lauren Brown & Justin Hill, photographed by Melissa Kincaid Photography; McKenzie Emrick & Travis Huffman, photographed by Margaret Schaad Photography

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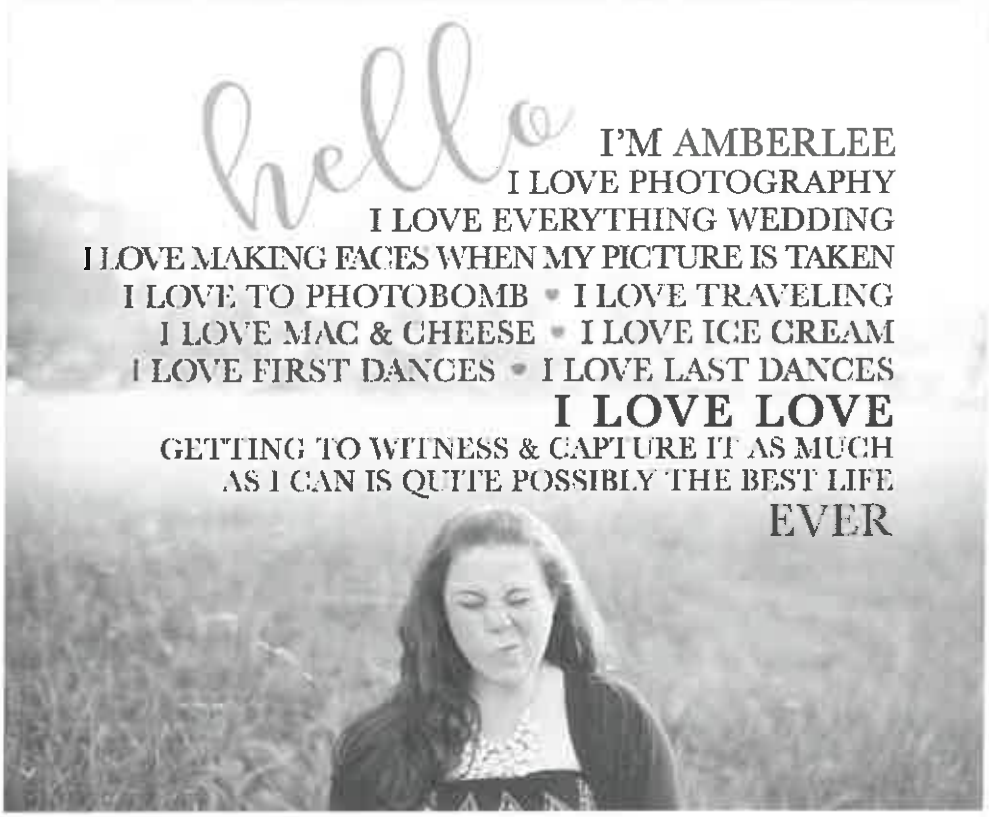

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best gown SHOTS

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: *Katelyn Gompers & Alexander Peluchette, photographed by James Carl Photography; Ashley Levell & Robert Sykes, photographed by Claire Watson Photography; Danica Kempinski & Adam Wilberger, photographed by ROGUE Film Co.*

best bridesmaids PICS

LEFT TO RIGHT: *Lauren Brown & Justin Hill, photographed by Melissa Kincaid Photography; Jennifer Nguyen & Kaison Ball, photographed by Hannah Hicks Photography*

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When You Marry in *June*

Years after high school, this couple returns home to Lewisburg for the perfect summer wedding.

WRITTEN BY *Demi Fuentes Ramirez* • PHOTOGRAPHED BY *The Oberports*

Barbara Lee Ford and Devin Judy were married at Barbara Lee's family farm in Lewisburg, called Little Moose Ranch. With vibrant homespun accents, the wedding showcased the couple's personality. The bride walked down a long curving aisle that was a path cut from the field.

SOME OF THE BEST LOVE STORIES HAPPEN UNEXPECTEDLY. This was the case for Barbara Lee Ford and Devin Gardner Judy. They met during gym class their sophomore year at Greenbrier East High School. "I remember he always made me and my sister laugh," Barbara Lee says. In a few years, they became good friends. They spent some weekends at Snowshoe, and drove miles together along the backroads of their beloved Greenbrier County. They didn't expect their relationship to blossom so quickly, but by the end of their senior year, their love story had begun.

A year after graduating from high school, Barbara Lee and Devin found that they had wanderlust. The couple packed their bags and moved to Colorado. Devin became an apprentice plumber and Barbara Lee became a full-time student, while working at a coffee and tea house. "Moving to Colorado was the best decision that we ever made," she says.

the proposal

Five years later, during one of their family trips to Puerto Rico, Devin asked Barbara Lee's mother for permission to marry her daughter. Excited, her mother gave him her consent. Devin immediately bought the ring and started planning the proposal.

When they got back to Colorado, Devin tried to get Barbara Lee to go hiking to Hanging Lake in Glenwood Springs, one of the most beautiful trail hikes in Colorado. After a couple of tries, she finally agreed. Devin also wanted some of her friends to be there with them. "I kept insisting, 'You guys will want to come and be there! It's going to be a beautiful hike!'" he laughs. And he was right. It was a beautiful day for a hike—and a proposal. He asked one of their friends to take a picture of them, and to Barbara Lee's surprise, he got down on one knee and asked her to become his wife.

More than 90 colorful arrangements decorated the reception. The bride's mother made colorful napkins to coordinate with the vibrant flowers and hung her vintage quilts on clotheslines outside.

The day before Barbara Lee and Devin's wedding, it poured the rain, but when they woke up the next morning, the sky was clear and the farm looked lush and beautiful. "I feel someone was looking down on me," Barbara Lee says.

the plans

When they started planning, choosing the date was not difficult. Barbara Lee grew up with three sisters and three brothers, and for this reason one of her favorite musicals has always been *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. After growing up listening to "June Bride" all her life, she knew that when her time came, she was going to be a June bride.

Barbara Lee and Devin didn't want a cookie-cutter wedding. They wanted a down-home wedding in their home state. The best place to do this was at Barbara Lee's family farm in Lewisburg, called Little Moose Ranch. "We mapped it all out," she says. "For the field, I wanted one straight path to where the ceremony would be, and my aisle would be long and curved so you could see me coming from far, far away." The idea was to give her time to walk down the aisle so she could see everyone who had come to her wedding. She hopped on the tractor herself and cut out the entire path in the field that would serve as her aisle. Her brothers helped rake the hay and prepare the field for guests. They also helped build a tall archway where the couple would say their vows.

When it came time to go dress shopping, Barbara Lee took a trip to Savannah, Georgia, with her mother and some of her siblings to a little boutique called Ivory and Beau. At first, the gowns she had in mind were not working for her. None of them looked or felt right. But there was one in the window display she had seen but had not yet tried. She put it on and, when she walked out of the dressing room, everyone was speechless. It was an elegant Hayley Paige Halo gown with ivory lace, tulle, and a scalloped V-neck bodice with open back and strap details. She had found her dress. A few months later, she found her veil at Emma and Grace Bridal Studio in Denver, Colorado. "It was phenomenal," she says. "I adored it. It was super long and dramatic with all these beautiful embroidered flowers on it. It was the perfect veil for my dress."

Devin decided to wear a white tuxedo dress shirt and navy tuxedo pants with navy suspenders. He had an orchid boutonniere, which matched Barbara Lee's bouquet. The groomsmen also wore navy tuxedo pants with suspenders. Barbara Lee also wanted to include her late grandfather in her wedding. "I wouldn't have my life or be the person that I am now if it wasn't for that man," she says. "So I picked some of his old blazers and had them tailored for my brothers. It was important to see them with a piece of our grandfather on my wedding day."

the perfect day

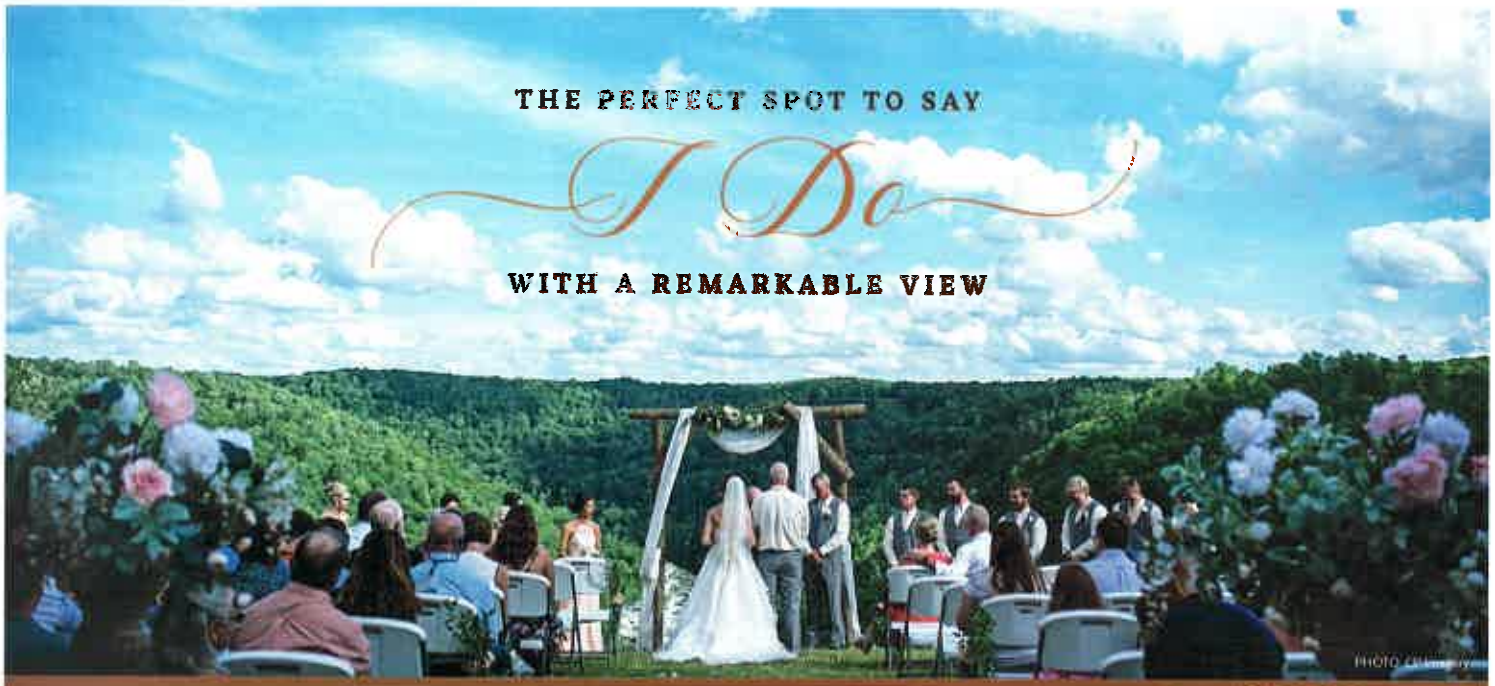
The day before the wedding, it poured. The couple feared that the farm would be muddy or that it would continue raining the next day, but they were in luck. "I feel someone was looking down on me," Barbara Lee says. "It was probably my grandfather, because we woke up and the sky was absolutely beautiful on the day of our wedding. You could definitely see how beautiful West Virginia is." It was the perfect weather for a June wedding.

Before saying their "I dos," Barbara Lee and Devin exchanged a first look. "I really didn't want to spend half the day without seeing each other," Devin says. "It was really nice to do that before the ceremony."

They chose white and blue as the primary colors for the ceremony, and then added pops of vibrant color throughout the décor. "We wanted to keep the homey and country vibe," Barbara Lee says. "So we included different pitchers with all kinds of flowers that my mother picked out." The farm was full of beautiful, vivid colors. Barbara Lee's mother worked with Christopher Glower from Greenbrier Cut Flowers, who created more than 90 colorful arrangements around the tent. Her mother also handmade napkins to match the arrangements. And to decorate outside the tent they draped some of Barbara Lee's mother's antique and homemade quilts on clotheslines.

In the end, Barbara Lee and Devin say they had the best wedding they could have hoped for. They wanted to spend their day at home with friends and loved ones. And most importantly, they wanted everyone to have a good time.

As the couple got in their car and left the reception, they looked back. They saw everyone they loved dancing, laughing, and having fun. Barbara Lee and Devin looked at each other and smiled. She was a bride in June, and she would always, always, always remember her perfect day.



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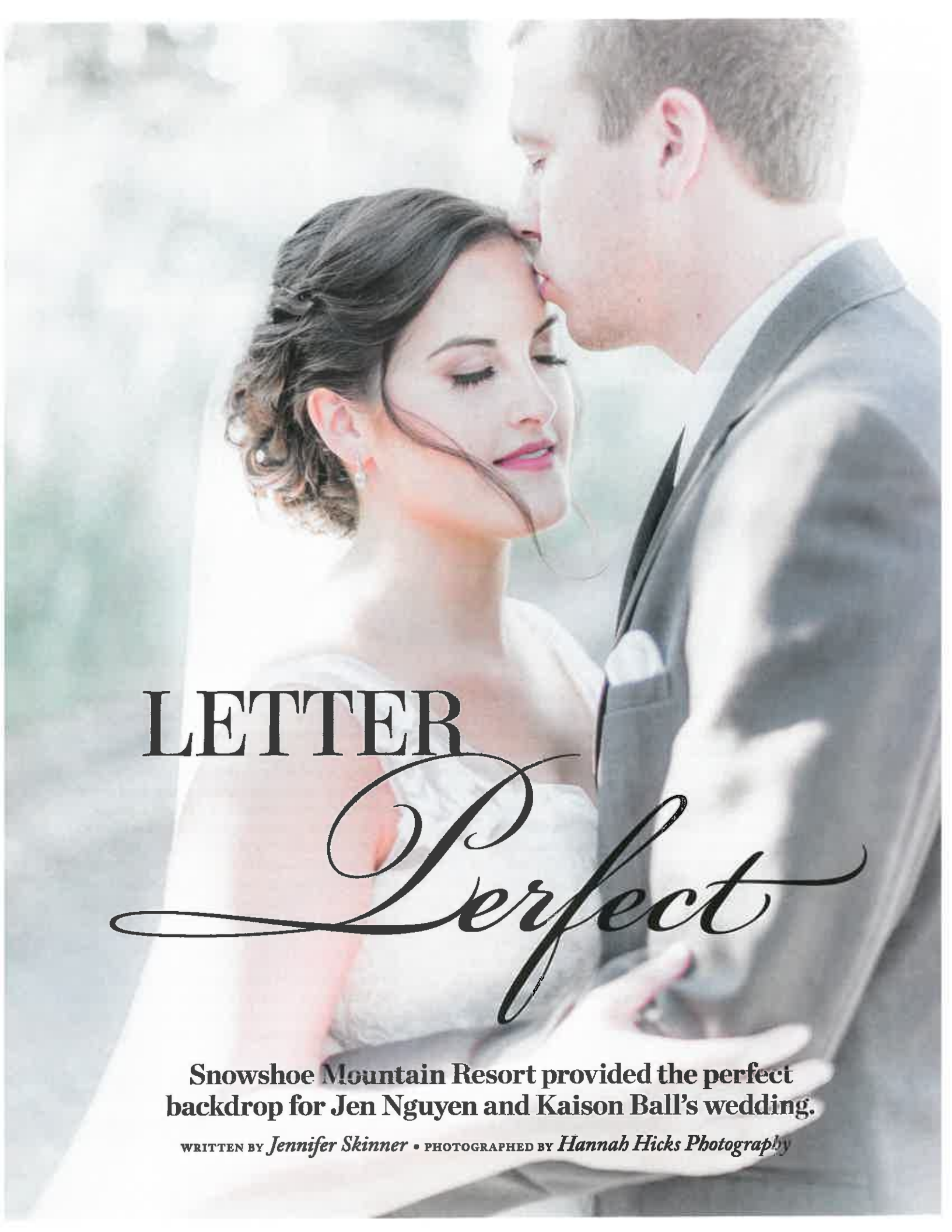
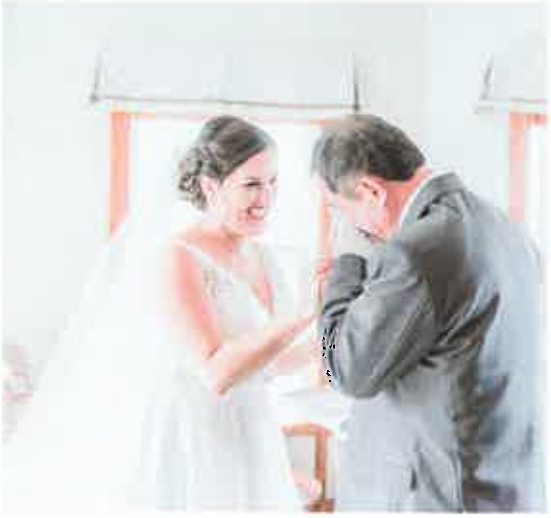


LETTER *Perfect*

Snowshoe Mountain Resort provided the perfect backdrop for Jen Nguyen and Kaison Ball's wedding.

WRITTEN BY *Jennifer Skinner* • PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Hannah Hicks Photography*



IT WAS STILL LIGHT OUT WHEN KAISON BALL gathered everyone around the bonfire at Jen Nguyen's graduation party, but he had to pop the question before her unsuspecting friends left for the evening. He had talked to her parents beforehand, and they were in on the surprise. Surrounded by friends and family at the home they'd renovated together, Kaison got down on one knee and proposed to Jen. The simplicity, fun, and personal touches of the proposal cast the vision for their dreamlike wedding to come.

the beginning

Jen and Kaison Ball met through mutual friends over Fourth of July weekend while they were attending West Virginia University, but it wasn't for another year that their paths crossed again. Kaison was living down the road from the restaurant where Jen was working, and after he asked her on a date, they spent three hours talking over dinner. They dated for three years and bought a house together in Morgantown.

They never talked about rings because Kaison knew Jen would prefer to be surprised, so a few months before the proposal, he went ring shopping with Jen's best friend while Jen was traveling for work. When Kaison told Jen's father, Lamson Nguyen, he was planning to propose, Lamson asked Kaison what had taken him so long.

As Jen's graduation approached, she said she wanted to go out to dinner to celebrate, but Kaison and Jen's father both pushed for a cookout party at the house the couple had just bought and renovated. Kaison thought it would be fun to show off the new place and celebrate Jen's graduation—and their engagement—at home with friends and family. Kaison felt a wave of disappointment as he realized he'd left the ring out on the counter the morning of the party. He thought she had seen it and knew what was coming. But when he asked the question, she was completely surprised—she admitted she had not seen the ring. "Jen had no idea, so that was the best part," Kaison says.

personally scripted

As the couple started their venue search, they realized they had to choose between two different ideas. Kaison wanted a destination wedding with fewer guests, but Jen, coming from a large family, wanted a local wedding that lots of guests could get to. Then they visited Snowshoe Mountain Resort and discovered they could get the best of both worlds. "Kaison could envision our day there, and he saw that I loved it," Jen says.

The couple's entrepreneurship gave them a creative edge as they planned their wedding. Together, they

Jen and Kaison chose to have their wedding at Snowshoe Mountain Resort for its scenic views, which they complemented with natural colors and soft touches throughout their wedding.

After the outdoor ceremony, guests enjoyed food and endless dancing at Soaring Eagle Lodge. Jen and her dad even kicked off the dancing fever with their own choreographed father-daughter dance.

own Home Brewed and Company, a small business that features Jen's hand-lettering and calligraphy on various products. Her calligraphy was on display throughout the wedding, from the invitations with a watercolor map of the wedding venue to the programs and all of the signage. "I wanted our wedding day to be a reflection of us," Jen says. "Kaison helps me run the business, too, so having my lettering everywhere on our day was important."

In the days leading up to the wedding, family and friends met at Snowshoe to get everything ready. "I think every girl nowadays has a Pinterest board so, trying to make that come to life, we DIYed a lot of it," Jen says. Kaison built a custom photo booth out of piping and the couple's living room curtains, and Jen found used doors to create an entrance to the ceremony aisle. While the bouquets were created by their florist, family and Jen's bridesmaids put together all of the artificial flower centerpieces. "It was really helpful to have so many hands put it together," she says.

magic in the air

The wind was blowing, but the sun was shining for Jen and Kaison's outdoor ceremony at Snowshoe. While their wedding was in West Virginia, it was enchanted by touches of one of their favorite places—Disney World. Kaison, who also works as a Disney vacation planner, gifted Jen with their own adventure book from the movie Up, and Jen walked down the aisle with her father to an instrumental version of "Tale as Old as Time." Even the paper that they wrote their vows on helped create their own magic—Jen wrote hers on a plane ticket to Orlando, Florida, while Kaison wrote his on "gringotts," or goblin money from The Harry Potter series.

Instead of lighting a unity candle, the couple decided to plant a unity tree. They read aloud how the tree symbolizes where their roots are and how they are growing as their own family. Jen's mom poured in soil from the family home Jen grew up in, and because Kaison moved around a lot growing up, Kaison's mom poured in soil that they had scooped out of the ground at Epcot from one of their recent trips to Disney World. The couple later planted the tree at their home in Morgantown.

After they were pronounced husband and wife, the couple stopped by the St. Bernard Chapel, where Jen's uncle, a priest, performed a small Catholic blessing with just their matron of honor and best man as witnesses. Jen and Kaison liked the intimate moment after their ceremony and before heading to the reception.

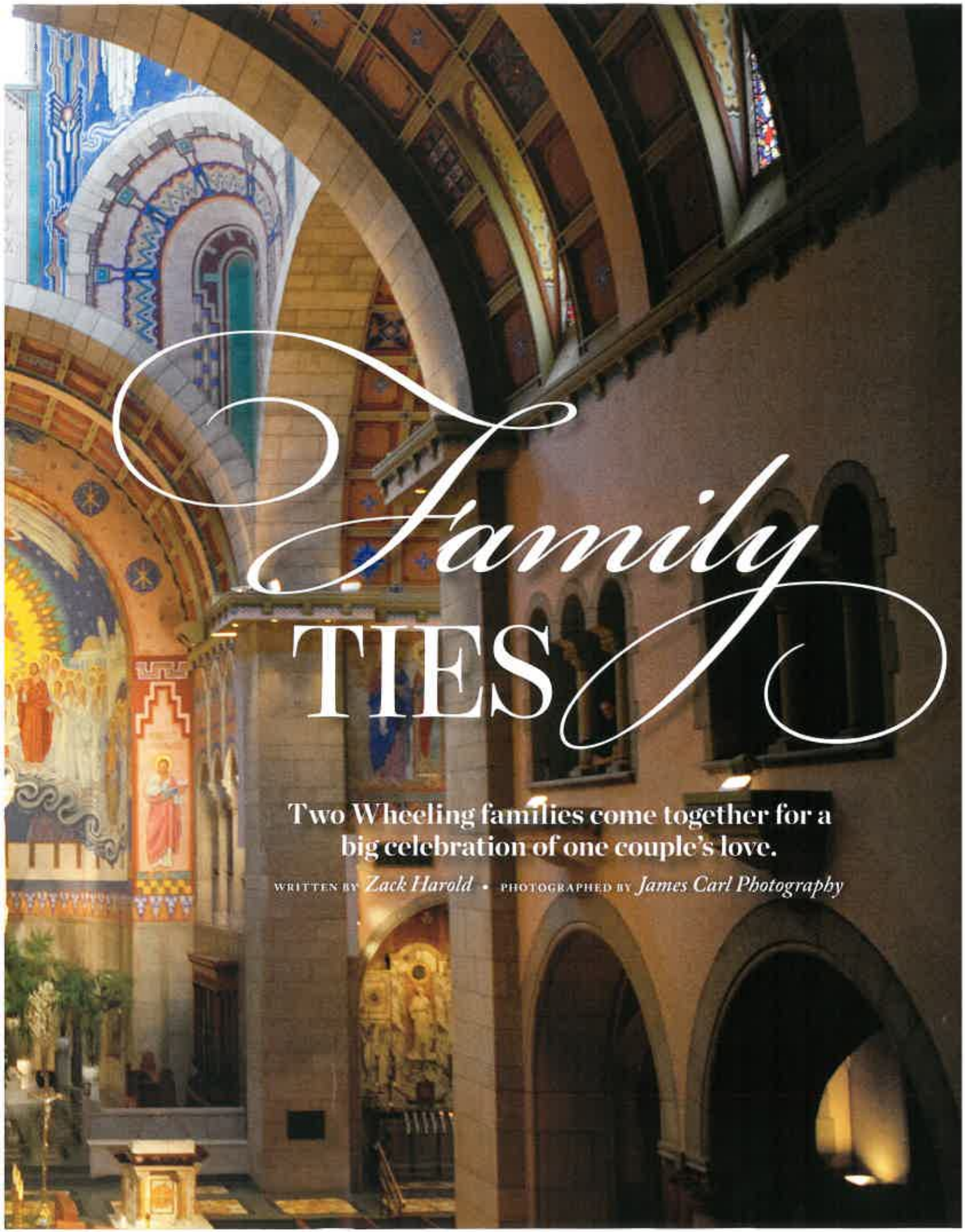
a perfect night

The newlyweds entered the reception at Soaring Eagle Lodge to the sound of cheers from their nearly 150 guests. Their first dance, to "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran, was followed by Kaison and his mom dancing to the traditional song, "Mother Like Mine." For the father and daughter dance, Jen and her dad surprised everyone with what started out as "Butterfly Kisses" but turned into a choreographed routine to "Single Ladies," "The Twist," "Jump On It," and other songs.

The rest of the night was full of great dancing between the delicious food and cake. Buffets lined the dining area on the terrace, and guests chose from a mashed potato bar, salmon, beef, chicken, salads, and more. The cake, made by B Sweet Confectionary in White Sulphur Springs, had even those who don't normally like sweets (like Kaison) fawning over its buttercream icing and raspberry filling.

Jen pulled one of her creative moves by surprising Kaison with a cigar bar during the reception. "I had absolutely no idea, and people really enjoyed it," Kaison says. "It was outside so we had a chance to wind down for a minute and relax."

The dance floor was full for the whole night, and Kaison and Jen were glad to see so many of their friends and family who had come in from all over the country enjoying their time at Snowshoe. "The whole weekend felt on another level of awesome for me," Jen says. "I would do it all over again in a heartbeat."



Family TIES

Two Wheeling families come together for a big celebration of one couple's love.

WRITTEN BY *Zack Harold* • PHOTOGRAPHED BY *James Carl Photography*

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES CARL has photographed his share of weddings at Wheeling's St. Joseph's Cathedral, a Neo-Romanesque structure designed to resemble some of Florence, Italy's finest basilicas. But he's only seen standing-room-only crowds at this gargantuan house of God on two occasions—Christmas Eve mass, and the wedding of Katelyn Gompers and Alexander Peluchette.

"Both our families are big Catholic families," Katelyn says. Her father is one of 12 siblings, and Alex's father is one of 10. "My dad joked—you had to find the one other family in Wheeling as big as ours," she says.

Strangely enough, it wasn't until Alex and Katelyn were attending West Virginia University that these two Wheeling natives finally met one another. "How we never crossed paths before is mind-blowing," she says. "All our aunts and uncles went to high school together. Our grandmothers were in the same kindergarten class."

Although they attended separate high schools, their brothers played football against one another, and Alex remembers seeing Katelyn at those games—that's why he had a mutual friend in Morgantown connect them. Not surprisingly, they quickly found they had a lot in common and began dating.

The couple resided in Morgantown while Alex finished his bachelor's degree and Katelyn attended pharmacy school. Then he moved to Washington, D.C., for an internship. A short time later, Katelyn moved to Ocean City, Maryland, before eventually relocating to D.C. But by that time, Alex had moved back to Wheeling to help with the family business. The long-distance relationship wasn't always easy, but they made it work. "We were constantly living out of each other's cars," Katelyn laughs.

Katelyn and Alex had been dating for seven years when he proposed. They had talked about it—and they both knew they wanted to spent their lives together—but Katelyn just figured the time wasn't quite right. "I always thought I would eventually come back to Wheeling and he would wait until I came back."

Alex had other plans. In September 2016, the Mountaineers were scheduled to face Brigham Young University in Landover, Maryland. Katelyn was living in D.C. at the time, and both her and Alex's families were in town for the game. Alex arrive a little early, dressed up and wanting to go out for a drink. But Katelyn had just finished a 13-hour shift and wanted to stay home. The next morning, Alex suggested they get breakfast. Katelyn didn't think it would be good idea, since their families would be arriving soon. "I was like, 'We don't have time.' Once I have a plan in mind it's hard to change my mind."

Katelyn and Alex opted for a classic look to complement St. Joseph Cathedral's Renaissance-inspired interior.

Decorations at the reception were also classy and classic, with lots of greenery and shades of white.

He persisted, and they drove to Georgetown, parked the car, and headed to the restaurant. They were walking along the canal when he finally got her attention—Katelyn turned around to find Alex, down on one knee, accidentally holding the ring upside down. "It was a total shock," she says. "I was hysterical. My first words were 'shut up.' But I said 'yes' immediately after."

It turns out the family visit that had Katelyn so stressed was all part of Alex's plans. He made dinner reservations that night for everyone to celebrate. "He did a great job. He had everything down to a tee."

the planning begins

Now, with a ring on her finger, Katelyn began making preparations to move back to Wheeling. The couple also began planning their August 2017 ceremony right away. Alex had asked for Katelyn's parents' blessing a few weeks earlier. "My mom, being a very big planner, she already started calling the cathedral and calling St. Mike's, and finding out what dates they had available."

Katelyn knew she wanted a traditional church wedding. "I always envisioned myself getting married in a church. And it meant a lot to my dad and grandfather." Her family attends St. Michael's Church in Wheeling, but one of Katelyn' cousins was recently married at St. Joseph's. "I knew right away that we wanted to get married there." The church doesn't usually allow non-parishioners to be married there, but her mom was able to convince the church to book the date.

With the cathedral's medieval-style stained glass windows, ornate altar, and huge mural, Katelyn knew she wouldn't need to do much decorating. "A lot of people will put all these flowers behind. I didn't want anything to take away from the altar and the colors," she says. She decided decorations would be limited to small arrangements of roses hung on the outside of the first few pews to signify where the bridesmaids, groomsmen, and the couple's immediate families would sit.

For the reception, Katelyn didn't want to risk an outdoor event. "Thank God we didn't, because the day of our wedding a hurricane came through." Instead, the couple chose a banquet room at another well-known Wheeling institution—Oglebay. Decorations here would also be elegant but simple. They rented chandeliers from Windswept Party and Event Rentals in Pittsburgh as well as white drapes to hang from the ceiling. "It turned it into a whole different room," she says.

finding the dress

When it came time to pick out her dress, Katelyn first went to a boutique in Washington, D.C., with her mom and dad. "I didn't want to find anything. I was just getting an idea." Then she visited Bridal Beginnings in Pittsburgh, where three of her cousins had recently bought their own wedding dresses.

She visited the shop with her mom and mother-in-law-to-be, where she quickly found the one—a

Katelyn says her favorite part of the reception was Alex's wardrobe change—he switched into a Sean Connery-style white dinner jacket after the ceremony.

form-fitting dress covered in layers of lace with straps, a deep v-neck in the front, an open back, and cutouts on the sides. "I wanted simple and romantic. There's no sparkle on it. I wanted to be able to look at pictures 20 years from now and not say, 'What the hell was I thinking?'" she says. "I'm a little partial but I thought it was breathtaking."

Katelyn bought her bridesmaids' dresses at Bella Bridesmaids in Pittsburgh, deciding on a gown that could be worn as a halter top, strapless, or on one shoulder. Alex picked out the tuxedos at Sorelle Bridal Salon in Washington, Pennsylvania. "He wouldn't show me a picture," Katelyn says. "He said, 'You won't show me your dress, why should I?'"

This worried Katelyn at first. "He kind of has a crazy style," she says. But he finally relented: He wanted to wear a white tux jacket like his grandfather and father had at their weddings. Katelyn wasn't sure, so they compromised. Alex would wear a standard black tuxedo for the ceremony, but a white jacket for the reception.

tying the knot

Given their families' history together, Katelyn and Alex knew their wedding would be a big event. So to avoid the wedding becoming a big reunion, Alex's mom threw a big rehearsal dinner for everyone at Oglebay's Stiefel Fine Arts Center. "It was more like a rehearsal party," Katelyn says.

The next day, Katelyn got ready at her parents' house before heading to St. Joseph's. Her dad had not seen the dress—"He said, 'No, I don't want to see it until the day of'"—so there were some tears when he walked in and saw her all dressed up. "It was probably one of my favorite moments."

Alex didn't see Katelyn's dress before the ceremony, either. "I know a lot of people do first looks, and we were both super opposed to that." That led to some intense emotions—for both bride and groom—when Alex first saw Katelyn coming up the aisle. "As soon as we got up on the altar, we were like, OK."

The couple marked their nuptials with a full Catholic mass, which included readings by one of Katelyn's brothers and one of Alex's groomsmen as well as songs by Katelyn's aunts. "For me the ceremony was by far my favorite part of the entire day," Katelyn says.

Once the ceremony was complete, everyone headed to Oglebay for the reception.

The resort's kitchen staff catered the event. Hors d'oeuvres included dilled shrimp and cucumber, stuffed cherry tomatoes with goat cheese, roasted tenderloin with red pepper coulis, and charcuterie boards. Dinner began with a cucumber-wrapped dinner salad topped with goat cheese and cranberries. For the entree, guests could choose salmon in a chardonnay butter sauce served with mashed potatoes and haricots verts or a roasted beef tenderloin served with stone-ground grits and grilled asparagus.

For dessert, guests enjoyed a five-tiered white cake with almond icing decorated with flowers from Bellisima Floral Shop in Wheeling. But that cake wasn't the only sweet available at the reception: The cookie table also attracted lots of attention. "It's a thing in the Ohio Valley. Our moms were insistent about it. Everyone made cookies for days," Katelyn says.

But Katelyn's favorite part of the reception was Alex's wardrobe change. In addition to a white dinner jacket, he completed the look with white-and-black wingtips. "He looked phenomenal," she says. "I loved it."

The couple had their first dance to "Can't Take My Eyes Off You" before guests hit the floor to the sounds of Hit Play, a five-piece Top 40 cover band from Wheeling. The dance floor was filled for the rest of the night, except for guests' frequent visits to the cookie table.

Alex and Katelyn honeymooned at a resort in Jamaica. They are now making their home in Wheeling, writing the next chapter in an old family story.

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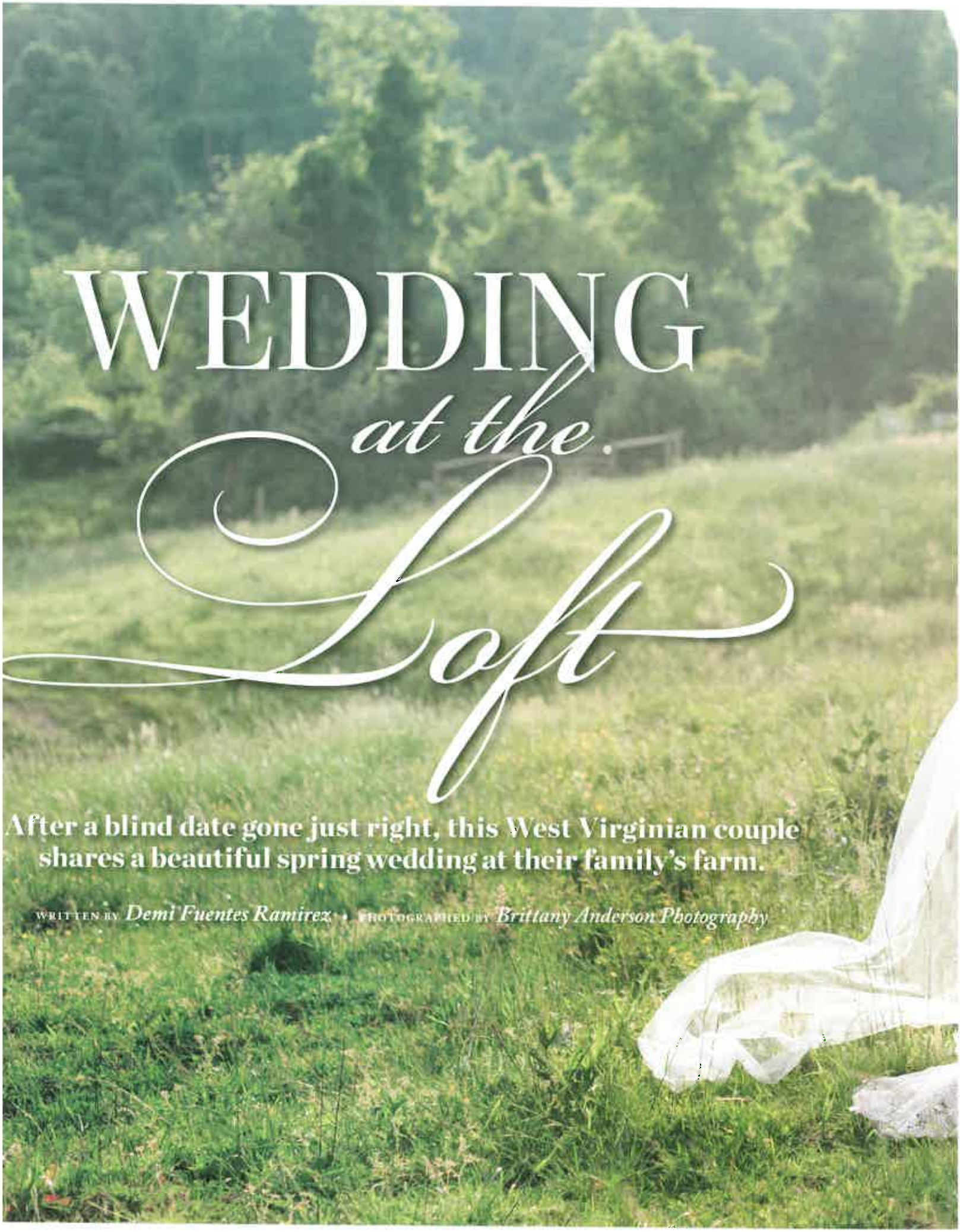

WEDDING at the Loft

After a blind date gone just right, this West Virginian couple shares a beautiful spring wedding at their family's farm.

WRITTEN BY *Demi Fuentes Ramirez* • PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Brittany Anderson Photography*

WAYLON MILLER WAS WAITING FOR the right partner. When his cousin's wife set him up on a date with one of her friends, he had no idea she would be the one. Quinn Edgell was newly single when her friend said she should meet her husband's cousin. He was a tall, red-headed Marine with a deep Southern voice and a good heart. Quinn thought he sounded too good to be true.

They met for coffee at Almost Heaven Desserts in Bridgeport. Although anxious at first, they immediately connected. "We talked for two hours and right off the bat everything kind of lined up just right," Quinn says. They knew they wanted to see each other again and soon became a couple. It was the best blind date they could ever have asked for.

the proposal

After dating for a little over a year, Waylon planned a weekend at The Greenbrier. During their last night, they had dinner, played chess, and walked around the grounds. Waylon wanted to propose at the spring house, but they couldn't find it. "I kept asking the staff for the wrong place," Waylon laughs. Quinn was curious about his insistence, but Waylon said he just wanted to take a picture for her mother since it was her favorite place. Of course, she believed him and did not expect what happened next. Waylon activated the timer, got to her side, and instead of posing for the picture, he got down on one knee and asked her to become his wife. In that moment, they could not have been happier.

the fixer upper

With five months until the wedding, they started planning right away. Thankfully, they didn't have to worry about finding a venue. Waylon's siblings had gotten married at their family's farm, so they decided to keep the tradition and get married at the Miller Farm in Barrackville. Together, Waylon's and Quinn's families began clearing out, sweeping, and cleaning up the barn. They refaced the front of the barn with redwood, and to preserve the wood, they used an ancient Japanese wood burning technique called "shou sugi ban." Their families also custom built the bar they would use at the wedding. And during the months leading to the big day, their families built their ceremony site. Way up the hill of the farm, there was an old fallen-down barn. They got rid of the debris, hauled out wood they could salvage, and burned the rest to prepare the area for the ceremony.

A few months later, Quinn found her dress. She knew she wanted something that would make sense for a rustic wedding at a barn but also have the glamour that she wanted. She found a dress online and drove to Bridal Beginning in Pittsburgh to try it on. A vintage-inspired Wtoo by Watters Elise gown, it featured tiered cupcake layers of eyelash lace. "When I saw just how it was fitted to the body and how the eyelash lace looked, I could picture dancing in it to Tim McGraw and Faith Hill in a barn." It was the perfect dress for the wedding they envisioned.

Quinn and Waylon planned their wedding in five months. The venue came easy—they chose Waylon's family farm in Barrackville. Quinn wore a vintage-inspired lace gown and her bridesmaids dressed in floor-length gowns in different colors with boho wildflower crowns.

Quinn and Waylon's family cleared out the barn on Miller Farm and refaced the front so the couple could use it as a reception site. The families also custom built a bar. Long tables were decorated with vibrant flowers, antlers, feathers, and candles and set with vintage dinnerware.

After an evening of dining, dancing, and playing with Sturgill, the miniature donkey, the couple ended the night with a lantern ceremony.

the big day

Up on the hill, overlooking the Miller Farm, the guests and bridal party were brought up on a tractor. It was a beautiful day for a wedding. The bridesmaids walked down the aisle to Van Morrison's "Into the Mystic." They wore boho wildflower crowns created by Perennial Floral in Fairmont. Then, Quinn's father walked her down the aisle to "Here Comes the Sun" by The Beatles. "I will never forget being there with my father and seeing him all dressed up, proud, and ready to walk me down the aisle," she says. "I can remember what the sun looked like on the hay. Everyone was up there and it was time, but here we were down the hill where no one could see us just yet. We were really in the moment."

At the reception, the barn was the main attraction. They chose subtle, yet elegant, white and turquoise decorations to complement the barn's grandeur. Instead of assigned seating, they wanted their guests to choose where they would to sit and dine together as one family. The long table had assorted vintage dinnerware that Quinn's mother bought at various antique stores. There was antique glassware sprayed with turquoise paint, and they did their own chandeliers sprayed with the same color. They also wanted to add a bohemian feel to the wedding and added deer antlers that they borrowed from their fathers and uncles. "It was a nice touch," Quinn says. "Everyone had fun talking about the antlers." They also decorated with pine branches, wildflowers, feathers, and about 200 peonies that came from Quinn's grandmother's flower bed.

When Waylon and Quinn walked in, they couldn't contain their excitement. "Entering the loft as husband and wife was my favorite part of our wedding," Waylon says. They finally got to share their first dance to Tim McGraw and Faith Hill's "It's Your Love." It was their favorite song. The one they always blasted at full volume while singing to each other. In that moment, it was theirs, but now it had a whole new meaning.

It was a unique DIY wedding. Their families worked together from beginning to end and enjoyed every moment of it. After a day of eating, dancing, laughing, and playing with Sturgill, their miniature donkey, they ended their night with a lantern ceremony. At dusk, with an open sky, everyone released their lanterns. It was a breathtaking view, the perfect way to end their unforgettable day.

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HOMEMADE *Marriage*

A bride brings her creative vision to life in a bohemian-themed wedding.

WRITTEN BY *Zack Harold*
PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Liv Hefner Photography*

THERE IS A REASON THE WORD "SINGULAR" HAS come to mean "remarkable." Sometimes even the best idea seems impossible to everyone except the person who dreamed it up. And in that case, it takes a singular talent with singular motivation to bring that idea to life.

That's what happened when Emma Boso began to plan her wedding. She wanted the event to reflect her "eclectic, bohemian" tastes. But, try as she might to explain her vision, no one else quite understood.

Others might have abandoned their ideas at that point, but Emma did not. She forged ahead and, despite being a full-time student with limited free time, personally oversaw nearly every detail of her big day. In the end, she got the wedding she envisioned—and created a day that family and friends will remember for years to come.

a homey vision

Emma Ervin met Sam Boso in 2013 at Parkersburg South High School, where she was a freshman and he was a junior. She got caught sitting in the upperclassmen area at a basketball game and one of Sam's friends told him to kick her out. Sam wouldn't do it, taking to Twitter to write, "Of course I'm not going to kick the pretty girl out of the student section."

He quickly deleted the tweet—but not before one of Emma's friends screengrabbed it and texted it to her. They began trading messages. A few weeks later, on Valentine's Day, they went on their first date and immediately became inseparable. They both enrolled at West Virginia University, where Sam studied civil engineering and Emma enrolled in the school's fashion design program.

They got engaged in August 2016, while on a camping trip with friends to Lake Erie. On their first night, Sam and Emma took a sunset walk along the beach until they came to a lighthouse. He knelt in the sand and popped the question. Emma said "yes" without hesitation.

The couple scheduled their wedding for August 2017, but didn't begin planning right away. Preparations didn't get underway until Christmas break of that year, with the ceremony less than eight months away.

Some of the particulars were easy to figure out. Sam and Emma knew they wanted to get married at his family's 13-acre property in Washington, Wood County. His sister had been married there a few years before, so benches were already in place for the ceremony. But Emma's ideas for decorating the grounds went far beyond the usual flowers and ribbons. She wanted to separate the outdoor space into various "rooms." "When guests walked in, I wanted them to feel like they were walking into an old-timey house," she says.

Emma designed each area of her wedding to represent a different room in a house. The ceremony was held in the "living room," which was decorated with oriental rugs, a mantle, and a chandelier. Instead of rice, birdseed, or bubbles, guests showered the newlyweds with rose petals, held in paper cones made from old sheet music.

Sam's father's walled-in garden area made the perfect backdrop for photo-taking photos.

She wanted the registry area to resemble a bedroom. There would be a secretary desk covered in wth globes, succulents, and old cameras. She would set out three dress forms for her mom's wedding dress, her grandmother's dress, and the wedding dress worn by both Sam's mom and grandmother. Nearby, on an antique sewing machine table, there would be the veil Sam's mom and grandmother wore as well as photos of all four women on their wedding days. The centerpiece of this area would be a white metal frame bed, where guests would drop off their cards and gifts.

For the ceremony area, Emma wanted to create the feel of a living room. She wanted to line the aisle with oriental rugs in varying colors and sizes running down the aisle. The couple would exchange vows before a white greenery-draped mantle and beneath a chandelier hanging from a tree. The bridal party would enter the area through two white doors. "Without the doors, it doesn't feel like you're walking into a room," she says.

While her family was happy to go along with her plans, they didn't quite understand Emma's vision. "My mom thought I was crazy. Sam's mom thought I was crazy." Nevertheless, she went antique hunting at every opportunity—with Sam tagging along as her muscle—to tracking down the items she would need. "We went antique shopping probably every single weekend for a year and collected stuff," Emma says.

She bought old box cameras, chairs, a vanity, a desk, and that big white bed. She found a chandelier and adorned it with colored crystals. The most difficult items to track down, surprisingly enough, were the oriental rugs. It took a long time to find the colors and sizes she wanted. "I was very picky with my rugs."

Even as her family saw the ever-increasing stash of décor, Emma still had a difficult time explaining how it would work. So, one sweltering summer day a month before the wedding, she decided it was time for a dry run. "Everyone was trying to help me but I was like, 'No, I need to do this.'"

She set up each room, just like it would be for the wedding. Finally, everyone got it. And before Emma put the items back in storage, she took photos so everyone would remember where everything needed to go.

a diy dress

Emma ordered her bridesmaids dresses from Show Me Your MuMu, an L.A.-based bohemian apparel brand. Some of her bridesmaids wore bohemian-style wrap dresses with uttering sleeves while some wore high neckline gowns with an open back. Sam and his groomsmen all wore blue tuxedos. "That's something else they thought I was crazy for," Emma says.

Sam did not initially want a blue suit but, after seeing the slate blue fabric at Hornor & Harrison in Parkersburg, he changed his mind. Emma picked out ivory shirts, vests, and ties to complete the ensemble.

For months, Sam and Emma spent nearly every weekend traveling to antique stores to find all the pieces she would need to make her wedding vision come to life. Their finds included lots of vintage furniture, knickknacks, and glassware for the reception, but Emma says the most difficult thing to find was the oriental rugs that would serve as her aisle runner.

"You always match the vest to the girl's dress, but I didn't want a prom look," she says.

When it came to her own attire, Emma only went shopping one time. "I just wanted to go for the experience. I went once, just to say I did," she says. "Everything I saw was too plain or not really my style."

She knew all along that she would make her own dress. "I always felt like i went to college for this, it would be a waste not to make it." Besides, Emma wanted a gown with drape sleeves and none of the bridal shops seemed to carry anything like that. "I still have not seen that out in bridal stores."

With wedding preparations and schoolwork, she did not have time to start on the dress until two months before the ceremony. "I think my mom almost had a stroke. Everyone was so stressed."

Emma wasn't stressed, however, even as she drafted five different designs—none of which seemed right. So she just began to make patterns. She then mocked up the dress with muslin, made everything fit, adjusted the patterns, and started sewing.

She made the dress from ivory-colored fabric and covered the garment in silver-threaded lace. The result was a fitted design that flares at the bottom. "It's not a mermaid dress but a trumpet dress," Emma says. She did all the work herself, except she needed the help of a local seamstress to get it hemmed—Emma couldn't pin the bottom while also wearing the dress. "She said it was hanging up and everyone who came in was asking where I got it." No one could believe the dress was handmade by the bride.

Guests went home with a reminder of Sam and Emma's homemade nuptials—women received candles made from vintage teacups they found during their antique store adventures, while men received small hand-labeled jars of honey purchased from a local beekeeper.

a boho-themed big day

Although the weather was stormy in the week leading up to Sam and Emma's wedding day, August 5, 2017 turned out to be a perfect 74 degrees and breezy. The couple was similarly fair-tempered. "I wasn't nervous at all. My friends commented on how calm I was," Emma says.

Emma's dad Fred, who also officiated the ceremony, escorted her mom to her seat before looping around to walk his daughter down the aisle to the 1990s jangle rock classic "There She Goes." It was the first time Sam had seen Emma's dress. "Her dress looked beautiful. she looked beautiful," he says. "It was a very good moment."

The ceremony was short and sweet—as a unity ceremony, the couple planted a maple tree to symbolize the strength of their relationship—and the newlyweds left the ceremony to Ben E. King's "Stand By Me." The reception was held just a short walk away, in a tent erected by the property's barn.

Sam and Emma's fathers built and stained each of the 14 tables used at the reception. Each was decorated with five centerpieces of garden roses, ranunculus, greenery, and other seasonal flowers. Guests dined on vintage china place settings with Depression glass cups and salad plates Emma collected during her antique hunts.

Theo's Restaurant in Cambridge, Ohio catered the meal, serving up parmesan chicken, mashed potatoes, green beans, bowtie pasta, and beef roast. "It was a lot of random stuff because they let me pick it out," Emma says. For dessert, guests enjoyed a three-tiered vanilla cake covered in textured buttercream icing and fresh flowers, made by The Village Cakery in Vincent, Ohio.

Then, with the meal finished, everyone headed to the dance floor. "We were worried at first because we didn't have alcohol," Emma says. But once DJ Chris Wilson of Premier Productions in Parkersburg got the music pumping, guests couldn't resist.

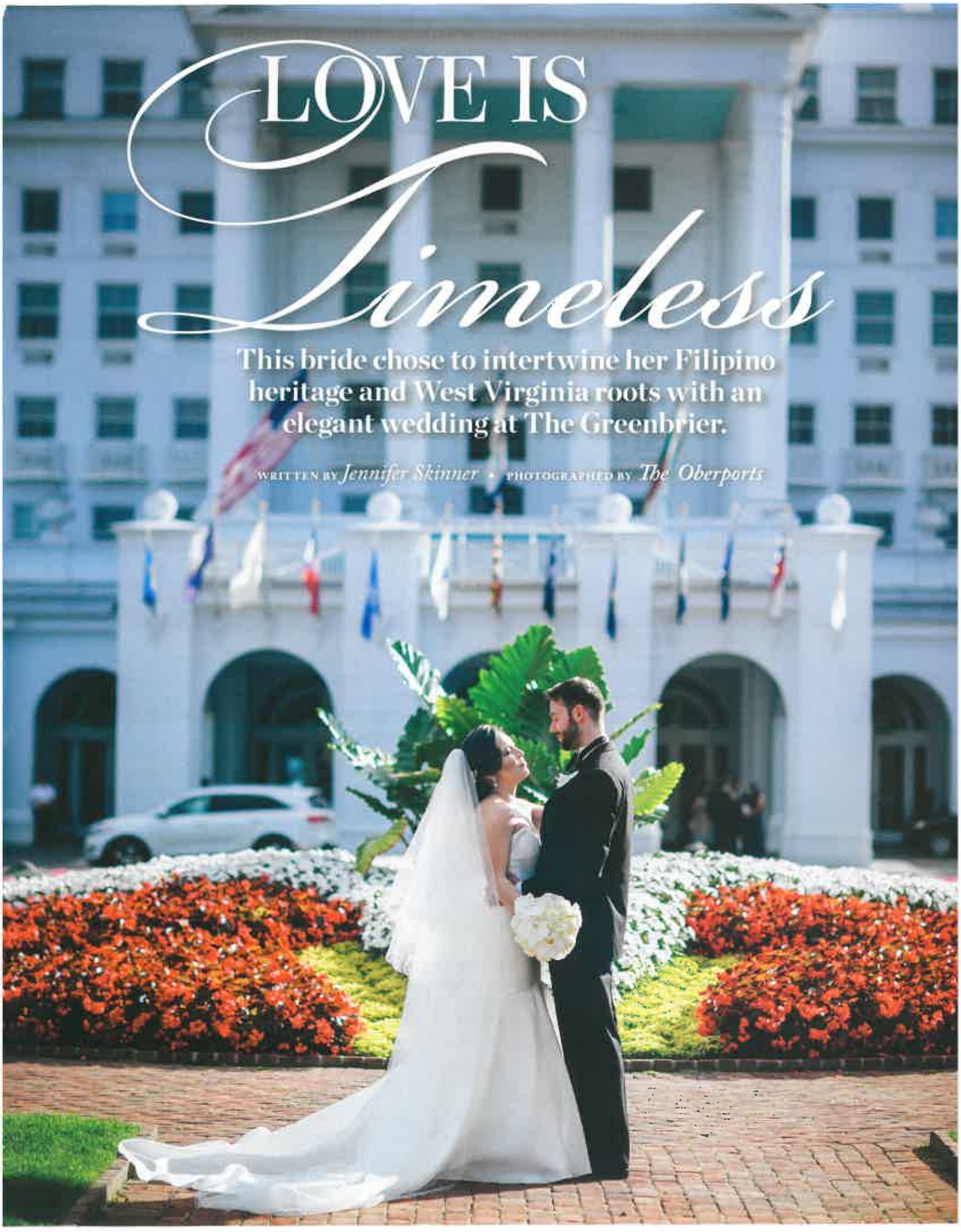
Emma and Sam's wedding favors followed the handmade vibe of the rest of the event. Women received candles made from antique teacups the couple bought and filled with wax. The men received small jars of local honey from Bob's Market in Belpre, Ohio.

The couple honeymooned in Nassau, Jamaica, then returned to Morgantown. They are now planning a move to Pittsburgh where Sam will work as a transportation engineer. Emma, who will graduate from WVU in December 2018, has landed a management job with Target. She hopes to someday work for a fashion design house. One thing is for sure—she has over a hundred guests who could provide one heck of a reference.

LOVE IS *Timeless*

This bride chose to intertwine her Filipino heritage and West Virginia roots with an elegant wedding at The Greenbrier.

WRITTEN BY *Jennifer Skinner* • PHOTOGRAPHED BY *The Oberports*



WHEN LESLIE-JOY ROMERO SIGNED UP FOR a gym membership near her medical school rotations in Charleston, she was offered free sessions with a random personal trainer. The problem was, she had her eyes on a very specific, very attractive trainer—Chase Harlow, who was working at the front desk of the gym. Chase agreed to take her on, and they started working out together. After running into each other outside the gym, they agreed to go on a date and have been together ever since.

popping the question

About three years later, Leslie and Chase went on vacation to Napa Valley, where Chase was planning to propose. "I planned everything," he says. "I picked the vineyard and the ring itself, and I talked to her father before the whole trip." While visiting the beautiful Frog's Leap Winery, Chase mentioned that they should have their waitress snap a photo, something slightly unusual for him. "He hates taking pictures, and I love taking pictures," says Leslie, who still had no idea—until Chase asked her to marry him. She said yes, and the wedding planning commenced.

classic but modern

The couple debated having a destination wedding, perhaps in Napa where they got engaged, but they ultimately decided to get married in West Virginia at The Greenbrier. Leslie, who grew up in Beckley, frequently performed in dances at The Greenbrier and later attended the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine in Lewisburg. Plus, it was an easy distance for family and friends to get to the wedding. "It was somewhere I always wanted to get married at," she says.

Leslie and Chase stuck to a black and white color scheme with accents of gold to convey a classic but modern look. "At The Greenbrier, we wouldn't have to decorate so much because everything is already so beautiful," Leslie says.

traditions and breaking them

Before the ceremony, Chase and Leslie took some time to bend the traditional lines for a first look. "It was a close, intimate setting," Chase says. "I was breathless. I just kind of stared at her for a minute." He had actually already seen his bride in her wedding gown, because he was with her the day she picked it out. Leslie was stressed out in the middle of her medical school residency, and none of her girl friends could join her when she had time to go dress shopping. "Normally I don't volunteer for these kinds of things, but I went with her so she didn't have to do it alone," Chase says, and Leslie could not have been more grateful. "We're not that traditional. I wanted his opinion and reaction," she says.

The ceremony, held in The Greenbrier Chapel, creatively intertwined Leslie's Filipino heritage with Catholic wedding traditions. Their Filipino priest included customs that are popular in the Philippines, like arrhae (coins), which

Chase and Leslie, whose family is from the Philippines, chose to incorporate Filipino traditions into their wedding, including a veil that covers both the bride and groom during the ceremony.

The Greenbrier, Leslie's dream wedding venue since she was a little girl, had everything the couple wanted. The beautiful Greenbrier Chapel allowed for a traditional Catholic and Filipino ceremony, the brightly decorated rooms and hallways served as the perfect space for pre-wedding portraits, and the reception ballroom was filled for the lively party with gold accents and a black-and-white checkered dance floor.

symbolize prosperity, wedding sponsors who commit themselves to providing guidance for the newlywed couple, and a veil and cord that are placed over the heads of the bride and groom to show unity and commitment to family.

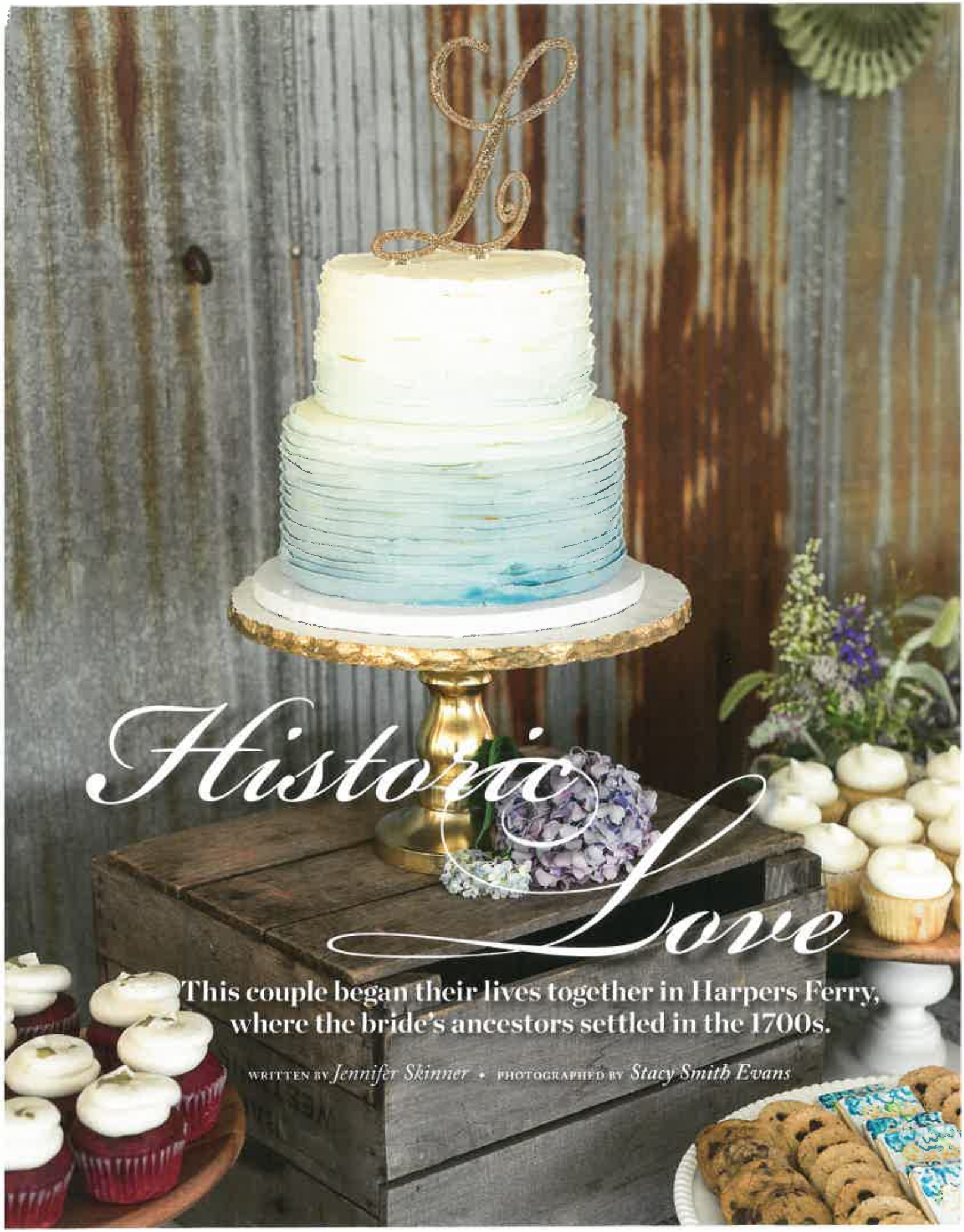
As Chase saw Leslie walking down the aisle, "There's my beautiful Filipino princess," he remembers thinking. "There's the girl of my dreams."

dancing the night away

It was time to enter the reception, and the getting-married nerves had died down, but a new anxiety plagued Chase. Leslie, formerly a professional dancer, introduced the idea of choreographing a unique first dance just a few weeks before the wedding. "That was probably more nerve-wracking than getting married," says Chase, but it turned out there was no reason to be nervous. The crowd loved their dance, which started with a slow song, turned into the comical '80s hit "Never Gonna Give You Up," and ended with hip-hop. It was the perfect entry to the party, where everyone enjoyed hilarious toasts by the bride's parents followed by filet and lobster catered by The Greenbrier.

Their event coordinators helped pull off the couple's vision, but there was one thing Leslie really, really wanted: "the black and white checkerboard dance floor. I felt like the dance floor was the big thing I said, yes, we *need* to have that." Why? Because Leslie's Filipino family loves to dance. "It's not a cliché," Leslie says. "At any Filipino event, you will see the Filipinos dancing. We wanted everyone to have a great time."

And as expected, the dance floor was packed for hours. Leslie and Chase hired a band to play classic hits and popular songs for the lively crowd. "Even after four or five hours of dancing and drinking and partying, everybody was still there dancing," Leslie says. After the wedding eventually wound down, the remaining guests went to the casino. "For days and months, when I would see family and friends afterwards, they would tell me it was a great time," Chase says.



Historic Love

This couple began their lives together in Harpers Ferry, where the bride's ancestors settled in the 1700s.

WRITTEN BY *Jennifer Skinner* • PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Stacy Smith Evans*

The Barn at York Hill provided the perfect flair of rustic charm for Sarah and John's adventurous personalities.

IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST HISTORIC SITE for Sarah and John Lustrea. John, a history major with a focus on the Civil War, ended up with a summer job at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, where he met Sarah, a West Virginia University student who was also enjoying seasonal experience at Harpers Ferry. John says, "It was pretty serendipitous."

adventure awaits

The couple started a long-distance relationship as John returned to graduate school in South Carolina and Sarah headed back to school in Morgantown. Within a few months, John says, they had the "when you know, you know" moment. As they came back together the following summer, John planned to propose during a road trip to the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. They stopped at the Route 11 Potato Chip Factory, picked up some bags of chips, and had a picnic before exploring Luray Caverns.

As they drove up Skyline Drive, John pulled off at an overlook. He asked a stranger to take a picture of them and got down on one knee and asked Sarah to marry him. "She was kind of surprised, so she stammered something and I couldn't hear her so I asked her to repeat it," John says. She did say yes, but then John froze. "I forgot I was supposed to put the ring on her finger," he says. Sarah's family in Martinsburg, aware of the day's events because John had told them ahead of time, celebrated with the newly engaged couple at the end of the day.

next stop

The first few weeks of engagement were exciting but rushed, since John was heading back to South Carolina for his last year of graduate school. They quickly found a photographer to take their engagement pictures in Harpers Ferry and started researching venues. One day,

The couple was married in the church building that goes far back in Sarah's family history. Her ancestors donated the land for the church, several family members are buried there, and her grandparents were married there.

Sarah and her mom visited a local coffee shop and ran into one of Sarah's old math teachers, who happened to mention that her son was getting married at the Barn at York Hill, an 18th century barn and orchard in Shenandoah Junction. "I looked it up and said, 'that's the one,'" Sarah says. The couple toured it, loved it, and booked it.

With the reception venue clinched, the rest of the wedding's rustic chic charm fell into place. Sarah complemented the barn's interior with lights, candles, blue hydrangeas, and gold accents. "I wanted it to look more natural," she says. "(The barn) is beautiful in its own way, and I didn't want to take away from that."

a special place

Sarah and John chose to have their wedding ceremony at the same church where Sarah's ancestors settled in the 1700s. One of her great-grandfathers donated the land for Christ Reformed Church in Shepherdstown, and several of her family members who died in the Civil and Revolutionary wars are buried there. "It's always had a special place in my family's heart," Sarah says. Even her grandparents were married there more than 70 years ago.

The couple waited to see each other until the ceremony. John tried not to gaze around the room too eagerly, so he slowly looked up as Sarah started her walk down the aisle – and then it hit him. "It slayed me, pretty much," he says. "I was so overcome by how beautiful she looked and the beauty of the whole moment, how so many people traveled far and wide to be with us." Their love filled the room as they recited traditional vows and exchanged rings. "I went to put his ring on, and his expression was just one of awe, disbelief, and excitement," Sarah says.

s'more fun

After the ceremony, guests enjoyed light appetizers during cocktail hour while the couple took pictures. But they knew exactly when the party started—John and Sarah entered the reception to the tune of the Chicago Bulls' starting lineup hype song. (John, the huge NBA fan, was also donning Bulls' socks.) They finally relaxed together during their first dance to "All My Heart" by Sleeping with Sirens. "It was a weirdly private moment," John says. "People were watching us, but we were locked in on each other."

One of Sarah and John's goals when planning their wedding was to show off West Virginia's natural beauty to their family and friends from out-of-state.

Their wedding at The Barn at York Hill gave guests a variety of spaces to roam, including outdoor tables and a bonfire.

The Barn at York Hill allowed for guests to congregate in various areas and wander around the venue. When they weren't eating their dinner of steak and margarita chicken, guests could hang out by the newly built bar, walk outside of the tent to outdoor tables, or make s'mores around the bonfire that burned all evening. Sarah and John's wedding planner found them a photo booth that everyone enjoyed, and the couple got to keep everyone's pictures afterward. And of course, there was the dance floor. John, a self-proclaimed metal music junkie, was excited that the family-friend DJ played a metal song and was met by a mini mosh pit from some friends.

Guests grabbed a bag of Route 11 potato chips as party favors that brought Sarah and John back to the day of their proposal. The couple also departed with a sparkler send-off. "A lot of my guests had never been to the East Coast or to West Virginia," says John, whose family and friends came in from his hometown outside of Chicago. "We wanted people to see how wild and wonderful West Virginia is," Sarah says. "People were amazed at how beautiful it was."

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BRIDE'S PARENTS
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Susan & Robert Foley

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
The Oberports

NATALIE, OF BRIDGEPORT, AND BRENDAN, of Overland Park, Kansas, met at a mutual friend's beach house in May 2012 and got engaged in February 2016. Brendan planned a weekend trip to one of their favorite escapes, Seaside, Florida. While walking along the beach, they stopped at a gazebo to watch the sunset and Brendan asked Natalie to be his wife. The ceremony and reception were held at Swift Level Farm in Lewisburg. The bride wore a simple lace gown with a chapel-length veil, and the bridesmaids wore black lace dresses. The groom sported a classic black suit with a black vest. The bride was escorted by her father and walked down the aisle to "Simple Gifts" played by her childhood friend. where the couple exchanged traditional vows and exchanged wedding rings that were family heirlooms. When the couple arrived at the reception site, they were surprised by the bride's late grandfather's voice playing as they walked in. Natalie's grandfather was a PA announcer for WVU Athletics and the WVU Marching band for 44 years before he passed away. The DJ surprised her with one of his famous intros from the WVU football games. The couple performed their first dance to "Can't Take My Eyes Off You" by Frankie Valli. Guests enjoyed a buffet of vegetables, fruits, chicken, potatoes, and salad. After dinner, dancing continued into the night and guests later went home with wedding-themed sports cups. The couple honeymooned at Playa Mujeres in Mexico.

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HAIR & MAKEUP
Toni Exquisite Hair, Morgantown
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
JoS. A. Bank, Tallahassee, FL
OFFICIANT
Dr. Ken Ramsey, Bridgeport
PLANNER
Rece Nestor, Lewisburg
CEREMONY MUSIC
Greg Harrison Band, Bridgeport
FLOWERS
West Farms, Lewisburg
CATERER
Hash Browns & New Grounds, Bridgeport
CAKE
Amy's Cakes & Cones, Lewisburg
ENTERTAINMENT
Santa Cruz Band, Charleston
Ed Morrison, Bridgeport
RENTALS
Gillespie's Flowers and Production, White Sulphur Springs
VIDEOGRAPHER
Pictory Productions
LOCATION
Swift Level Farm, Lewisburg

ANGELINA DOMINICA NICOLE ANGOTTI & JOSHUA ROBERT ZONTEK

SNOWSHOE | 7.15.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Cindy & Frank Angotti

GROOM'S PARENTS
Debbie & Mike Mann

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Brittany Anderson Photography

CLARKSBURG NATIVES ANGIE AND JOSH met while she was in high school and he was at college with her brother and cousin. After dating for a few years, Josh decided to propose on the day Angie got her master's degree in education from West Virginia University. They went home to prepare for a commencement party her family was having in Clarksburg, but little did she know that it was actually an engagement party. While getting ready, Josh called her to look at something odd outside the window. When she looked outside there was a sign in the yard that said "Marry Me." When she turned around, Josh was down on one knee with a ring in his hand. Their ceremony was at Snowshoe Mountain. The bride chose a strapless ivory Oscar de la Renta gown with a lace Vera Wang overlay. Her bridesmaids wore blush taffeta Monique Lhuiller mermaid-style dresses with V-neck tops. The groom and groomsmen wore matching black tuxedos and bow ties from Skasik's. Angie's father walked her down the aisle while the groom's cousin played "Canon in D" on the piano. The couple was happy to exchange vows written by their minister and friend Vishnu Reddy, who also surprised the couple and officiated their ceremony. They shared their first dance to "Say You Won't Let Go" by James Arthur. The evening concluded with guests uniting in a circle around the couple as the band played "Take Me Home, Country Roads." Instead of a honeymoon, the couple took an anniversary trip to the Caribbean.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Saks Jandel, Chevy Chase, MD
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Bella Bridesmaids, Charleston, SC
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Skasik's, Clarksburg
COORDINATOR
Jaime Eiler, Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Snowshoe
FLOWERS
JoJo's Floral & Bridal, Elkins
CATERER
Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Snowshoe
CAKE
Torchia's Italian Pastries, Bridgeport
GROOM'S CAKE
Torchia's Italian Pastries, Bridgeport
ENTERTAINMENT
Affirmative Groove, Richmond, VA
FAVORS
Linda Xander, Buckhannon

MICAH RASHELLE BALLARD & DILLON LEE MADDEN

GOLDSBY, OKLAHOMA | 8.11.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Paula & Mike Ballard

GROOM'S PARENT
Debra & the late Glen Madden

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Beth Forester

MICAH OF MADISON AND DILLON OF WAYNE, OKLAHOMA, met through the Tinder dating app. The first time he appeared on the app, Micah didn't think they would work. Who had time for long distance relationships anyway? She swiped left and even deleted the app after some time. A few months later, she downloaded it to give it another shot and Dillon appeared again. Giving him a chance, she found that they had many things in common. They decided to meet. After two and a half years of traveling to see each other, Dillon decided that it was time to make it official. While he was on a job assignment in Florida, Micah visited him and they decided to have a night at home. While dancing in the kitchen, they recalled a night they'd spent under the stars, and to her surprise, Dillon said, "The only thing better would be if we were under the stars right now." He then got down on one knee and proposed. Their ceremony was held at Southwind Hills in Goldsby, Oklahoma. The bride wore a Justin Alexander beaded and embroidered lace mermaid gown with a cathedral-length veil. She completed the look with earrings designed by Jill Zborovancik. The groom wore the Oklahoma native attire of starched denim jeans, a classic black long sleeve dress shirt, and a black blazer. The vintage black cowboy hat was an addition after the ceremony. The bride's bouquet had pink peonies entwined with lace from her mother's veil, and it featured a locket with her late and beloved Nana's photograph. For their first dance, the couple two-stepped Oklahoma-style to their favorite song that represented their relationship: "Interstate" by the Randy Rogers Band. During the reception, the couple was surprised by a video toast from Boone county native Marnie White of "The Wild and Wonderful Whites" giving her best wishes to them. At the end of the night, the crowd gathered outside as the couple made their exit through streamers and confetti. They honeymooned at Secrets Resort in Playa Mujeres, Mexico. Micah is a family nurse practitioner and Dillon is a pipeline engineer. The happy couple are now traveling the country for Dillon's job assignments.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Boutique by B.Belle Events, Charleston
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
RoseTree Boutique, Ceredo
HAIR & MAKEUP
Chelsey Ann Artistry, Oklahoma City, OK
ACCESSORIES
Jill Zborovancik, Burlington, VT
John Cook Jewelers, Charleston
GROOM'S ATTIRE
Men's Wearhouse, Dallas, TX
GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Langston's Western Wear, Oklahoma City, OK
COORDINATOR
Elaine Tabor, Southwind Hills, Goldsby, OK
FLOWERS
Debra Harless, Madison
CATERER
Fred Aulotta, Southwind Hills, Goldsby, OK
CAKE
Amy Cakes, Norman, OK
GROOM'S CAKE
Amy Cakes, Norman, OK
ENTERTAINMENT
OKC DJ Weddings M&M Productions, Oklahoma City, OK
FAVORS
Sweets on the Side, Edmond, OK
VIDEOGRAPHER
TKR Media, Moore, OK; Joe Linville, Danville
LOCATION
Southwind Hills, Goldsby, OK

CHARLOTTE BIBBEE & JOHN VELLENOWETH

BIDWELL, OHIO | 7.22.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Julie & Keith Bibbee

GROOM'S PARENTS
Susan & Rod Vellenoweth

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Ashley Watts Photography

CHARLOTTE OF POINT PLEASANT AND JOHN OF WHEELING met through a dating app while living in Columbia, South Carolina. She was a pediatric resident and he a fitness coach. During their first conversation they found that they were both from West Virginia and actually already had a friend in common. On August 13, 2016, John took Charlotte for a hike in the nearby Blue Ridge Mountains, set up his camera for a scenic photo of them, and surprised her with a stunning solitaire. The rehearsal dinner was held at the Point Pleasant River Museum, and the wedding took place just across the Ohio River at The Green Valley Gathering Place, an outdoor venue with a lake background. The aisle was lined with a dozen 24" pots of garden flowers. Charlotte's strapless, sweetheart neckline gown with lace applique was embellished with beads and pearls. Charlotte's wedding band is her great grandmother's wedding band, and she wore family heirloom jewelry given to her by her paternal grandmothers—a pearl necklace and bracelet and a blue lindy star ring. She carried a cascading bouquet featuring coral peonies, Blanca roses, and magenta calla lilies. The groom wore a black Michael Kors Sterling wedding suit with ivory accessories. The guests received fans printed with the names of the wedding party, eight of the 12 being West Virginians. The favors were jars of honey declaring the marriage is "Meant to Bee." The cake table was set with Charlotte's maternal grandparents' American Fostoria. Platters held cupcakes embellished with edible pearls. A family punch recipe was served from a punch bowl used in three generations of weddings. The cake plate was a wedding gift to her grandparents 67 years ago. Flowers topping the cake and in the Fostoria bud vases, further accentuated the garden theme.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Jo-Lin's Bridal, Irmo, SC
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
J & J on the Avenue, Parkersburg
FLOWER GIRL'S DRESS
Wendy's Bridal Columbus, Dublin, OH
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Mike Allen Tuxedos, Gallipolis, OH
FLOWERS
Four Seasons Florist, Point Pleasant
CATERER
Wellington's Cafe & Catering, Charleston
CAKE
Jennifer Cordiff, New Haven
ENTERTAINMENT
Justin Fornoso, Wheeling
Math Audio, DJ, Chillicothe, OH
FAVORS
ana'scrafts.etsy.com
LOCATION
Green Valley Gathering Place, Bidwell, OH

RACHEL BLAIR & CHRIS HOLESTINE

MILTON | 5.20.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Sheryl Blair & Jeffery Blair

GROOM'S PARENTS
Brenda & Robert Dunlap

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Meredith Dickens Professional Imagery

ALTHOUGH RACHEL, OF DUNBAR, AND CHRIS, OF SOUTH CHARLESTON, both graduated from South Charleston High School in 2009, they didn't actually meet until 2012 when they reconnected through social media. After dating for a few years, Chris decided it was time to pop the question. He planned a surprise day trip to take her zip-lining for the first time, but due to Rachel's nervousness, he held off the proposal to plan something more calming for her. A few days later, while walking along a wooded trail at a local park in Dunbar, he got down on one knee and asked Rachel to be his wife. The couple decided on an outdoor ceremony held at The Maylon House in Milton. The bride chose an ivory Pronovias floor-length, fit-and-flare gown with a V-back and a side-draping skirt. Gold Badgley Mischka heels completed the look. Her bridesmaids wore pale sage Alfred Angelo dresses. The groom wore a navy suit. During the ceremony, the couple exchanged traditional vows. In that special moment, the groom—who doesn't cry easily—even got teary-eyed. After the ceremony, guests enjoyed a cocktail hour in the tavern area with yard games, appetizers, and the couple's signature drinks: Lemon Lime Mojito was the bride's choice, and Jack and Coke was the groom's choice. At the reception, the couple shared their first dance to "I Won't Give Up" by Jason Mraz. Guests left the reception with koozies in the wedding's colors. The couple honeymooned at Pawley's Island in South Carolina and now reside in Dunbar. Chris is an assistant manager of a body shop in South Charleston, and Rachel is a loan assistant at a bank in Charleston. The couple is expecting their first child in October.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Boutique by B.Bella Events, Charleston
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Rosefree Boutique, Ceredo
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Men's Wearhouse, South Charleston
FLOWERS
C-K Florist, Kenova
CATERER
The Maylon House, Milton
CAKE
Paula Vega Cakes, Huntington
LOCATION
The Maylon House, Milton

CARA PATTON BOYLE & DAVID ROBERT POGUE

CHARLESTON | 4.29.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Christine & Richard Boyle

GROOM'S PARENTS
Patricia & Robert Pogue

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Melissa Perella Photography

DAVE, FROM WHEELING, SAW CARA, FROM CHARLESTON, for the first time while she was working at a Coach store in Charleston. Although he did not work up the nerve to ask her out at that time, he was lucky enough to get another chance when the couple was later set up by a mutual friend. They have been inseparable ever since. After a year of dating, Dave decided to propose at the Festival of Lights at Oglebay. At the end of the tour, the couple planned to see the mansion, which is Cara's favorite part of Oglebay. When walking towards it, Dave told Cara to keep walking so he could take a good photo of her in front of the mansion's decorated entrance. When they arrived and she turned around, Dave was down on one knee. The couple wanted their wedding to be a special day from the heart, so Cara planned the whole wedding and handmade the invitations and decorations for the wedding. Cara always dreamed of getting married at St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Charleston, the same church her parents got married in 41 years before. The bride wore a Tara Keely ivory shantung ball gown with an Alençon lace illusion bateau neckline and a deep V-back. The groom and groomsmen wore gray suits and personalized bow ties and pocket squares to match the bridesmaids' dresses. The bride's bouquet included a mix of ranunculus, hydrangeas, tulips, roses, and gerbera daisies. The reception was held at the Holiday Inn & Suites Charleston West in Charleston where there was a Beatles-themed cocktail hour. For their first dance, the couple choreographed a dance to Ed Sheeran's "Thinking Out Loud." Guests enjoyed coloring books and a photobooth at the reception to bring out the childish nature in everyone. The couple spent their honeymoon at Negril in Jamaica. They now reside in Charleston, where Cara is an underwriting representative and Dave is an attorney.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Boutique by B.Belle Events, Charleston
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Elizabeth Michael's Boutique, Vienna
HAIR
Corena Maiden, The Blend, South Charleston
MAKEUP
Kalyn Walls, Charleston
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Men's Wearhouse, Charleston
OFFICIANT
Father Babu Joseph Elamturuthil
CEREMONY MUSIC
Mark Scarpelli & Jonathan Tucker, Charleston
Eric King & Keith Cox, Charleston
FLOWERS
Winter Floral and Antiques, Charleston
CATERER
Holiday Inn & Suites Charleston West, Charleston
CAKE
Sweet Imagine Custom Bakery and Confections, Charleston
GROOM'S CAKE
Sweet Imagine Custom Bakery and Confections, Charleston
ENTERTAINMENT
Vinyl Village, Charleston
VIDEOGRAPHER
Wedflik, online
PHOTO BOOTH
The West Virginia Photo Booth Company, Huntington
CEREMONY
St. Anthony's Catholic Church, Charleston
RECEPTION
Holiday Inn & Suites Charleston West, Charleston

LAUREN BROWN & JUSTIN HILL

CRAB ORCHARD | 7.15.17

WEB EXCLUSIVE • MAY

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Rebecca & Randy Brown

GROOM'S PARENTS
Kay & Brian Hill

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Melissa Kincaid Photography

PRINCETON NATIVES LAUREN AND JUSTIN met in high school after starting their first job at a local restaurant. Years later, Justin surprised Lauren with a trip to Myrtle Beach. The couple was walking at the beach, and at sunset, Justin got down on one knee and proposed with his grandmother's ring. The ceremony was held at Daniel Vineyards in Crab Orchard. The bride wore a Hayley Paige ivory lace and tulle ball gown with a low open back, crisscross strap details, and a cascading tulle skirt. The bridesmaids wore full-length pastel floral dresses, and the groom and groomsmen donned charcoal gray tuxes with white dress shirts. The bride's grandfather, who was dressed in his military uniform, tossed flowers down the aisle prior to her entrance. The couple exchanged vows in front of an archway entwined with greenery. The bride carried a mixed floral bouquet comprised of pink and white roses. During the ceremony, following the Native American legend, the couple released a butterfly in hopes that their wishes come true. The couple honeymooned at Riviera Maya in Mexico. They currently reside in Bluefield where Lauren is a nurse, and Justin works with first aid sales.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Mia Bella Couture, online
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Pretty Plum Sugar, online
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Bowties and Butterflies, Bluefield
FLOWERS
Webbs of Beckley Florist, Beckley
CATERER
A Taste of Memphis, Princeton
CAKE
Susie's Sweet Cakes, Flat Top
ENTERTAINMENT
John Corbett, Carla Bragg,
Kaitlyn Bragg, Princeton
Keith Bailey, Princeton
Mike Eden DJ, Princeton
LOCATION
Daniel Vineyards, Crab Orchard

LAUREN MARIE BURLEY & ALEXANDER CRAIG TUFTS

ASHLAND, KENTUCKY | 7.1.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Melissa & Clinton Burley

GROOM'S PARENTS
Barbara & Allen Tufts

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Powell Photography

KENOVA NATIVES LAUREN AND ALEX MET IN 2007 during high school and got engaged in 2016 while Lauren was in her third year of medical school. The couple travelled to Ohio's Hocking Hills, where Alex proposed at Glen Laurel, a quaint, romantic Scottish retreat. The ceremony was held at the First Christian Church in Ashland, Kentucky—where the bride's paternal grandparents were also married—and the reception took place at The Old Post Office in Ashland. The bride walked down the aisle in an A-line gown with an embellished sweetheart neckline. The bridesmaids' blush pink dresses were adorned with moonstone embellishments, and the groom wore a Calvin Klein traditional tuxedo with a textured vest and tie. The floral arrangements included a multitude of peonies, roses, similar blush-toned flowers, and eucalyptus leaves. At the reception, the couple performed their first dance to "Remedy" by Adele. The four-tiered wedding cake had a gold lattice detail on the bottom tier, a 24 karat gold-painted second tier, and two blush pink top tiers adorned with a flower wreath that matched the bride's bouquet. Guests left the reception with small bags of Glen Laurel's signature vanilla granola with a note from the bride and groom attached. After an evening of celebrating with friends and family, the couple exited through an archway of balloons held by the guests. The couple honeymooned at Zoetry Paraiso de la Bonita in Riviera Maya, Mexico, and reside in Huntington, where Lauren will be a resident with Marshall Pediatrics, and Alex is a civil/structural engineer employed by United Group Services of Ashland, Kentucky.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Bridal and Formal, Cincinnati, OH
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Bridal and Formal, Cincinnati, OH
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
JoS. A. Bank, Huntington
CEREMONY MUSIC
The Strings, Charleston
FLOWERS
Spurlock's Flowers and Greenhouses, Huntington
CATERER
Suzcatering, Barboursville
CAKE
Suzcatering, Barbousville
ENTERTAINMENT
Joshua Ruby, BRAVO-Live DJ, Hurricane
FAVORS
Glen Laurel, Rockbridge, OH
VIDEOGRAPHER
Alyson Biggs
CEREMONY
First Christian Church, Ashland, KY
RECEPTION
The Old Post Office, Ashland, KY

MEGAN COLLEEN CALLAGHAN & JAMES MARION BAILEY

SNOWSHOE | 8.5.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Dana Robertson Callaghan
Michael O. Callaghan & Cheri Heflin

GROOM'S PARENTS
Dawn & James Bailey
Roxanne Pauley

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
NOW Productions

MEGAN, OF CHARLESTON, AND JAMES, OF SOUTH CHARLESTON, met at West Virginia University while involved in the Student Government Association. However, it wasn't until they graduated and moved back to their hometowns that they started dating in 2012. After they'd dated for several years, Snowshoe had become the couple's favorite getaway, and James decided it was the best place to pop the question. He proposed at the Mountain Lodge lawn overlooking Shavers Lake in 2016, a year before they would get married at the same location. One of the couple's close friends got certified to officiate their wedding. The couple exchanged traditional vows and participated in a Gaelic hand tying ceremony. The bride's Essence of Australia lace A-line gown featured illusion sleeves and a grosgrain ribbon adorned with diamante accents. The groom wore a traditional navy tuxedo. The bride was escorted by her father while a traditional bagpiper played "Mairi's Wedding." One of the bride's close friends read a poem by e.e. cummings as part of the ceremony. The couple hosted a tented reception overlooking the slopes of Snowshoe Mountain. They performed their first dance to "La Vie en Rose" by Louis Armstrong. The reception was candlelit with gold candelabras on all tables, and for the sweetheart table, the father of the bride handmade a barn wood sign that said "Love," and the florist created a lush look with a robin's egg blue table cloth. The guests enjoyed peanut butter, marble, buttercream, and red velvet cake, and the groom's cupcakes featured his favorite things, such as several Marvel characters, a scale of justice, and the couple's adorable dog named Gigi. The couple honeymooned at Sandals in St. Lucia. They now reside in Charleston, where Megan is a realtor and James is an attorney.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Vow Boutique, Morgantown
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Vow To Be Chic, online
HAIR
Jaclyn Bates, Salon 405, Charleston
MAKEUP
Claire Vishman, Makeup by Claire V, New York, NY
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Men's Wearhouse, South Charleston
OFFICIANT
Steven Wolfe
RINGS
Calvin Broyles Jewelers, South Charleston
CEREMONY MUSIC
Bruce C. Wright, Durham, NC
FLOWERS
Jolo's Floral and Bridal, Elkins
CATERER
Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Snowshoe
CAKE
Cakes by Appointment, Charleston
GROOM'S CUPCAKES
Cakes by Appointment, Charleston
ENTERTAINMENT
BRAVO-Live Entertainment, Charleston
FAVORS
Popcorn Factory, Carle Place, NY
LOCATION
Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Snowshoe

JENNIFER HELEN COOPERRIDER & PATRICK GERARD CORMAC COSGROVE

COLUMBUS, OHIO | 4.22.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Cathy & Dan Cooperrider

GROOM'S PARENTS
Irene & Paul Cosgrove

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Jessica Love Photography

JENNIFER FROM CROSS LANES AND CORMAC FROM DERRY, Northern Ireland, met while doing research at a laboratory in Boston. Jennifer was working prior to medical school and Cormac was starting a post-doctoral fellowship when their relationship took flight. A few years later, after Jennifer took the final exams of her clinical year of medical school, Cormac surprised her with an evening of dinner, drinks, and a walk in the park where they had enjoyed one of their first dates. There, he got down on one knee and asked Jennifer to be his wife. The couple chose Franklin Park Conservatory Palm House for their ceremony and reception. The bride wore a full-length tulle sheath gown, featuring a keyhole back and a sweetheart neckline with beaded corded lace over Chantilly lace. She completed her look with a beaded-edge fingertip veil and her mother's pearls and great grandmother's brooch on her bouquet. The groom paired a kilt in Maclean of Duart tartan with a titanium gray tweed argyle jacket. The groomsmen also wore gray tweed argyle jackets, kilts in a variety of tartans, gold ties, and monogram cufflinks gifted by the groom. The flower arrangements incorporated the colors of the kilts featuring protea, tulips, lysantheums, godetia, ranunculus, and garden roses, with a variety of greenery. The couple were married in the gazebo and wrote their own vows. During the cocktail hour, guests explored the butterfly house and enjoyed a video of the couple compiled by the bride's mother. At the reception, the couple performed their first dance to "Flowers in Your Hair" by The Lumineers. The wedding tied the couple's backgrounds and families together—guests were taught traditional Scottish Ceilidh dancing by the groomsmen and later went home with jars of West Virginia honey. The couple honeymooned at Amara Resort and Spa in Sedona, Arizona. They now reside in Chicago, Illinois, where Jennifer is a resident physician and Cormac is a research scientist.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Wendy's Bridal Columbus, Columbus, OH
HAIR & MAKEUP
Charles Penzone Salon, Columbus, OH
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Kilt Rental USA, Phoenix, AZ
COORDINATOR
Emily Buroker, Franklin Park Conservatory, Columbus, OH
FLOWERS
The Flowerman Columbus, Columbus, OH
CATERER
Franklin Park Conservatory, Columbus, OH
CAKE
The Angry Baker, Columbus, OH
Just Pies, Gahanna, OH
ENTERTAINMENT
Buckeye Entertainment, Columbus, OH
LOCATION
Franklin Park Conservatory Palm House, Columbus, OH

KELI CUNNINGHAM & NATHANIEL ZINN

FARMINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA | 6.3.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Joyce & Joe Cunningham

GROOM'S PARENTS
Linda & Harris Zinn

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Laurel Mountain Photography

WHEN COUNTRY ROADS BROUGHT KELI HOME TO WEST VIRGINIA to continue her career at a place so dear to her heart, she never expected that the person who would later capture her heart was working just yards away under the same roof in a venue where the two had previously and separately developed a deep admiration for the Mountaineers, the WVU Coliseum. Nathaniel, from Clarksburg, and Keli, from Petersburg, had been working together for a few years at West Virginia University before they connected on a more personal level at a baseball banquet. Almost two years later, on Christmas Day, Nathaniel proposed to Keli at her father's home in West Virginia with her mom, sister, and brother-in-law present. Keli was shocked, as she had been speculating that Nathaniel would propose at Nemacolin Woodlands Resort, a special place among the mountains that the two had become very fond of while they were dating. It was only fitting that they later chose Nemacolin as the site for their wedding day. On June 3, 2017, exactly two years from the date Nathaniel purchased Keli's engagement ring, the Cunningham and Zinn families along with their dearest of friends gathered together to celebrate the marriage of Keli and Nathaniel. From sunrise to nightfall, joy, love, and laughter radiated throughout the festivities highlighted by a gold and blue palette. As the day came to a close, the DJ cued John Denver while family and friends circled the bride and groom for a tradition that highlights every win for the Mountaineers, the singing of "Take Me Home, Country Roads." And just as fireworks fill the sky during memorable moments in Mountaineer history, so too would fireworks light up the night in celebration of their greatest day, the day that Keli and Nathaniel became Mr. and Mrs. Zinn.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Bridal Beginning, Pittsburgh, PA
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Daniel's of Morgantown, Morgantown
PLANNER
Bobbi Oper, Farmington, PA
CEREMONY MUSIC
Three Rivers String Quartet, Pittsburgh, PA
FLOWERS
Bella Fiore Floral, Morgantown
CATERER
Nemacolin Woodlands Resort, Farmington, PA
CAKE
Nemacolin Woodlands Resort, Farmington, PA
ENTERTAINMENT
Kingfish, Pittsburgh, PA
FAVORS
Belles Booths, Morgantown
VIDEOGRAPHER
Megan Sutherland
LOCATION
Nemacolin Woodlands Resort, Farmington, PA

BAYLEIGH CATHERINE DAVISSON & STANLEY JOHN TIMINSKI III

DAVIS | 6.3.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Leslie & Richard Stasny
Kevin & Sherry Davisson

GROOM'S PARENTS
Cindy & Stanley Timinski, Jr.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
CAS Photography

BAYLEIGH AND STANLEY'S BEAUTIFUL DAY WAS HELD AT CANAAN VALLEY RESORT in Davis, and could not have been more perfect. The mountains served as a beautiful backdrop. The couple chose to get married in Canaan because the bride's grandfather, Marshall, was a state police officer in Parsons, and took her on many trips to Canaan Valley. As the couple said their vows, they were surrounded by friends and family from both Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The bridal party was a mix of family and close friends. Many of the groomsmen were lifelong friends that made the trip from Scranton, Pennsylvania. The couple chose a young cousin from each side of the family to be their ring bearers, and the couple's young niece, a cousin, and a close family friend served as flower girls. The gray, blue, and gold color scheme perfectly reflected their love for the Mountaineers and the place where they met and fell in love. The weather was perfect for an outdoor ceremony in the courtyard of the ski lodge at the base of the mountain. The Bear Paw Lodge provided the perfect atmosphere to match the simple, rustic theme they chose for their wedding. Their first dance was to "Can't Help Falling in Love" by Hailey Reinhart, a modern take on an Elvis classic. They served wedding cake to the bridal party and their family, and the guests were treated to an assortment of cupcakes. Throughout the reception, they incorporated personal details, such as pictures of them at different ages as table numbers and photos of their late grandparents. To end their perfect day, their family and friends joined together in a circle to sing "Take Me Home, Country Roads" as the couple danced in the center, singing along.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Vow Boutique, Morgantown
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
David's Bridal, St. Clairsville, OH
ACCESSORIES
David's Bridal, St. Clairsville, OH
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Men's Wearhouse, Pittsburgh, PA
COORDINATOR
Nancy Guthrie, Davis
FLOWERS
Blossom Village, Beverly
CATERER
Canaan Valley Resort, Davis
CAKE
The Flower Cakery, Weston
GROOM'S CAKE
The Flower Cakery, Weston
ENTERTAINMENT
Ron Gooden, WV Cool Tunes
VIDEOGRAPHER
Trevor Skene, Visual Creativity
LOCATION
Bear Paw Lodge at Canaan Valley Resort, Davis

ASHLEY NICOLE DAWSON & ELIJAH BLAINE BENNETT

SISTERSVILLE | 5.20.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Vickie & Doug Dawson

GROOM'S PARENTS
Linda Gessner & Tim Bennett

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Karo J Photography

ST. MARYS NATIVES ASHLEY AND ELIJAH met in high school in 2007. After dating for many years, in 2015, Elijah decided it was time to pop the question. Elijah told Ashley that her sister-in-law was going to take fall pictures of them at their hometown park where they grew up. Little did she know that they were really engagement pictures. When the photographer asked Ashley to turn her back to Elijah, Ashley thought it was just another pose. But when she turned around, Elijah walked toward her, got down on one knee, and said, "I knew you wanted to look pretty. I knew you wanted pictures. And I knew you wanted it to be unexpected. Will you marry me?" The ceremony was held at The Barn at Woodridge in Sistersville, and the two were married on a hilltop overlooking the West Virginia hills. The bride wore an ivory Christina Wu ball gown. The groom wore a Heather Gray tuxedo from J & J's Personal Touch in Parkersburg. The bride was escorted by her father and walked down the aisle to "You and Me" by Lifehouse. The reception was held inside the barn where the couple shared their first dance to "In Case You Didn't Know" by Brett Young. After dinner, the couple played a shoe game where they both held a shoe from the groom and bride and sat back to back. They were asked questions about each other and the couple had to raise a shoe to answer a question. At the end of the night, the couple receive a sparkler send-off from their guests. They honeymooned at Punta Cana in Dominican Republic. They reside in Williamstown.

BRIDE'S GOWN
J & J's Personal Touch, Parkersburg
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Azazie.com
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
J & J's Personal Touch, Parkersburg
PLANNER
Vickie Dawson
FLOWERS
Oopsa Daisy Florist, Newport, OH
CATERER
The Barn at Woodridge, Sistersville
CAKE
The Barn at Woodridge, Sistersville
ENTERTAINMENT
Class Entertainment, Parkersburg
LOCATION
The Barn at Woodridge, Sistersville

QUINN LAROUX EDGELL & WAYLON KEITH MILLER

BARRACKVILLE | 5.20.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Donita & Robert Edgell

GROOM'S PARENTS
Dana & George Miller

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Brittany Anderson Photography

IN THE FALL OF 2015, QUINN'S FRIEND ALLISON asked if she would consider meeting her cousin, a tall red-headed Marine with a deep southern voice and a good heart. After a lengthy description of his values and personality, Quinn asked, "WHY is he still single?" "He's just waiting on the right girl," Allison replied. The two met for coffee at Almost Heaven Desserts in Bridgeport and talked for two hours. Waylon later told Quinn that he had held the door open for her and her mother at Cracker Barrel over a year earlier and begged Allison to introduce them. A year later, Waylon took Quinn to The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs for a weekend getaway. She was suspicious of Waylon's anxious behavior, a departure from his normally calm demeanor. Around midnight, after dinner and a hilariously pitiful game of chess, Waylon asked Quinn to go for a cold November walk on the grounds. They stopped for a photo at the Spring House, which was lit up for Christmas at The Greenbrier. Waylon "set the timer", got down on one knee, and recorded his spontaneous midnight proposal. Waylon and Quinn wanted to continue the Miller family tradition of holding nuptials at the family farm. Months leading up to the big day involved heavy DIY wedding prep with the whole family, including a barn demo, a barn reface, hand-built pews and a hand-built bar. The bride even literally caught her hair on fire while burning unsalvageable barnwood. On a calm spring day in mid-May, Waylon and Quinn were wed on his family farm. They borrowed deer antlers from uncles and draped the barn loft in turquoise crystals, Edison bulbs, and lace. Bridesmaids donned flower crowns and walked down the aisle to Van Morrison, "Into the Mystic." Quinn walked through a meadow to her groom to George Harrison, "Here Comes the Sun." Kids played with farm animals, couples mingled by the pond-side lounge, and guests sent lanterns into the sky at dusk.

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

An EDITOR'S Pick

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BRIDE'S GOWN
Bridal Beginning, Pittsburgh, PA
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Free People
Revolve Clothing
Anthropologie
Lulus
MAKEUP
Riversong Spa, Bridgeport
FLOWERS
Perennial Floral, Fairmont
CATERER
Curley's BBQ, Havelock, NC
Meg's Country Kitchen, Cascara
CAKE
Bake N Memories, Bridgeport
ENTERTAINMENT
Sundown Entertainment, Clarksburg
VINTAGE RENTALS
The Mustard Couch, Morgantown
VIDEOGRAPHER
Weekend Project Studios, Pittsburgh, PA
LOCATION
Miss Emily's Farm, Barrackville

McKENZIE SHEA EMRICK & TRAVIS LOUIS HUFFMAN

HUNTINGTON | 5.20.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Brenda & Brad Emrick

GROOM'S PARENTS
Kelly & Deron Huffman

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Margaret Schaad Photography

PARKERSBURG NATIVES MCKENZIE AND TRAVIS MET IN JUNIOR HIGH. Although Travis had been asking McKenzie to be his girlfriend since the ninth grade, they officially started dating in their senior year, in 2009. Six and a half years later, Travis told McKenzie they were going to dinner to celebrate the end of the semester and his upcoming graduation from Marshall University. The couple got dinner at their favorite restaurant, and then Travis surprised McKenzie with gelato and a walk through Harris Riverfront Walk in downtown Huntington. Travis had researched what time the sun would set and, when they were down by the river looking at the sunset, he got down on one knee and asked McKenzie to be his wife. When deciding on a date for the wedding, McKenzie already knew what she wanted. On May 20, 1950, her paternal grandparents got married. In 2015, her grandfather passed away exactly one day after their 65th anniversary. McKenzie wanted to honor the 65 years her grandparents had been together. And on her wedding day, displayed a portrait of her grandparents on the day they got married. The ceremony was held at Camp Mad Anthony Wayne in Huntington. It took place outside under a wooden arch made by the groom's father. The bride was escorted by her father and walked down to "Tenerife Sea" by Ed Sheeran. Instead of traditional flowergirls, the grandmothers tossed flower petals. The couple exchanged traditional vows and had a three chord braiding unity ceremony representing their bond as husband and wife with God. At the reception, guests enjoyed a buffet-style spread of finger foods. Guests went home with white seed papers that the bride's mother cut into heart shapes that included a word of thanks from the bride and groom inside, along with another pink seed paper heart. The couple were sent off with maracas and other noise makers. They honeymooned by taking small road trips and seeing their favorite band, Mumford and Sons. The couple resides in Barboursville.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Elizabeth Michaels Boutique, Vienna
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Elizabeth Michaels Boutique, Vienna
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
B&E Menswear, Huntington
FLOWERS
Garrison Designs & Florist, Huntington
CATERER
The Happy Pineapple, Culloden
CAKE
Suzcatering, Barboursville
LOCATION
Camp Mad Anthony Wayne, Huntington

SPRING/SUMMER 2018 COVER Couple

EMMA ELIZABETH ERVIN & SAMUEL QUINN BOSO

WASHINGTON | 8.5.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Lydia & Fred Ervin

GROOM'S PARENTS
Anne & Ed Boso

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Liv Hefner Photography

EMMA MET SAM IN 2013 AT PARKERSBURG SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL, after he refused to kick her out of the upperclassmen seating at a basketball game, tweeting "Of course I'm not going to kick the pretty girl out of the student section." One of Emma's friends sent her the tweet and, before long, the two started dating. They both went off to WVU and were engaged in August 2016 during a camping trip to Lake Erie. Sam and Emma decided to get married outdoors on his family's 13-acre property in Wood County, then spent every weekend hitting up antique stores for items to create different outdoor "rooms"—a bedroom and sitting room for the reception area, a living room for the ceremony, and a dining room for the reception. Emma also sewed her own wedding dress, crafting a fitted gown with a flaring bottom from ivory-colored fabric and silver-threaded lace. After walking his daughter down the aisle to the 1990s rock classic "There She Goes," Emma's dad officiated the ceremony. The ceremony was short and sweet—and the newlyweds left the ceremony to Ben E. King's "Stand By Me." The reception was held just a short walk away in a tent erected by the property's barn. Sam and Emma's fathers built and stained each of the 14 tables used at the reception. Each was decorated with five centerpieces of garden roses, ranunculus, greenery, and other seasonal flowers. Guests dined on vintage china place settings with Depression glass cups and salad plates the bride picked up during her antique hunts. For dessert, guests enjoyed a three-tiered vanilla cake covered in textured buttercream icing and fresh flowers. A DJ provided music to get guests on the dance floor, where everyone stayed for the rest of the night. The couple honeymooned in Nassau, in the Bahamas, before returning to Morgantown.

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

An EDITOR'S Pick

SEE PAGE 42

BRIDE'S GOWN
Handmade
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Show Me Your Mumu, Venice, CA
HAIR
Brittany Schoolcraft
MAKEUP
Makeup by Meredith, Parkersburg
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Hornor & Harrison, Parkersburg
STATIONERY
Yours Truly Invitations by Lindsey, Parkersburg
FLOWERS
Passiflora, Marietta, OH
CATERER
Theo's, Cambridge, OH
CAKE
The Village Cakery, Vincent, OH
ENTERTAINMENT
Premier Productions, Parkersburg
RENTALS
McGuffey Tents, Williamstown
FAVORS
Bob's Market, Belpre, OH
VIDEOGRAPHER
Pathway Media
LOCATION
Boso Family Home, Washington

CHELSEA BROOKE FISHER & NICHOLAS CARROLL BURDETTE

MILTON | 5.13.17

WEB EXCLUSIVE • AUGUST

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Kristy Sayre & Charles Fisher

GROOM'S PARENTS
Julie & Brian Burdette

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Callie Lindsey Photography

RIPLEY NATIVES CHELSEA AND NICHOLAS MET at Ripley Middle School when they were 11 years old. They were assigned to sit across from each other during lunch and became good friends. When they graduated from high school, they went their separate ways. However, in the summer of 2014, they reunited during their senior year of college. Since Nicholas was no longer dating his high school sweetheart, Chelsea asked him out on a date, and they have been inseparable since. When it was time to pop the question, Nicholas took Chelsea to their favorite bonfire spot, the place where they had their first date. While sitting on the tailgate of Nicholas' truck, they listened to their favorite songs. Soon he was down on one knee, crying, and professing all the reasons why he loved her. With much joy and love, Chelsea began to cry and said yes. The couple married at The Maylon House in Milton. The bride wore a Stella York, ivory A-line gown with a plunging neckline made of tulle with lace pieces and beads scattered around the skirt and train. She completed her look with a half-inch Diamante-encrusted grosgrain ribbon belt. The bridesmaids wore sleeveless blush cocktail dresses with a crochet pattern over the dress and rose gold belts with rhinestones. The groom and groomsmen wore slim black tuxedos and champagne blush bow ties. The flower arrangements included antique and quicksand roses, dusty pink roses, antique and ivory hydrangeas, seeded eucalyptus greenery, hypericum green flowers, and more. The couple exchanged traditional vows and had a wine unity ceremony after the ring exchange. The wedding cake boasted four tiers of chocolate, white, and white raspberry filling and was adorned with decorative fondant flowers airbrushed with rose gold and gold glitter. Guests went home with wildflower seed paper confetti hearts. The couple honeymooned at Catalonia Royal Tulum Resort in Cancun, Mexico.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The House of Fashions, Bridgeport
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
David's Bridal, Charleston
Nordstrom, online
HAIR
Robin Snodgrass, Sissonville
GROOM'S AND GROOMSMEN ATTIRE
Estep's the Nu Look, Charleston
INVITATIONS
Minted.com, online
CEREMONY MUSIC
Jenny Allinder, St. Albans; Linda Scott, Springfield, OH; Annie Hancock, Ravenswood; Christopher Fisher, Goldtown
FLOWERS
Winter Floral & Antiques, Charleston
CATERER
The Maylon House, Milton
CAKE
Suzcatering, Barboursville
GROOM'S CAKE
Donna Leaptrot, Kenna
RENTALS
Defining Moments, Ripley
FAVORS
KaBloomz, etsy.com
VIDEOGRAPHER
Donna Leaptrot, Kenna
LOCATION
The Maylon House, Milton

BARBARA LEE FORD & DEVIN GARDNER JUDY

LEWISBURG | 6.24.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Barbara Hamilton & Gary Ford

GROOM'S PARENTS
Jeff & Brenda Huffman
Lorena & John Judy

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
The Oberports

BARBARA LEE AND DEVIN GREW UP IN THE GREENBRIER VALLEY and met in high school. Devin always made Barbara Lee laugh, and by the time their senior year ended, their love story began. Five years later, while hiking with friends to Hanging Lake, a beautiful crystal clear body of water in Glenwood Canyon, Colorado, Devin asked Barbara Lee to take some pictures with him. Little did she know that Devin would be getting down on one knee to ask her to be his wife. The ceremony was held at the bride's family farm, Little Moose Ranch. The couple were married overlooking the fields of the 350-acre farm. At the ceremony, the bride was escorted by her mother and father. The bride chose a halo gown by Hayley Paige. The bridesmaids wore prairie blue flutter sleeve wrap dresses and white sandal corkscrew heels. The groom and groomsmen donned navy tuxedo pants with navy suspenders, white tuxedo shirts, and orchid boutonnieres to match the bride's bouquet. The bride's three brothers wore their grandfather's custom silk jackets and ties, all tailored to fit them individually. At the reception, the couple entered the tent and shared a choreographed dance to "Offering" by The Avett Brothers, which was performed by The Poor Taters. Guests later took home "seeds of love," small coin envelopes stamped with metallic gold flowers. For their honeymoon, the couple invited the wedding party and some family members to join them in Puerto Rico at El Conquistador Resort in Fajardo. They now reside in Glenwood Springs, Colorado.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Ivory and Beau, Savannah, GA
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
lulu's, online
ACCESSORIES
Emily Fout, Fizzy Love Jewelry, Glenwood Springs, CO
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Men's Wearhouse, Grand Junction, CO
PLANNER
Cheryl Sullivan, Charleston
CEREMONY MUSIC
Adam Degraff
FLOWERS
Greenbrier Cut Flowers, Lewisburg
CATERER
Dutch Haus, Lewisburg
CAKE
Amy Cakes, Lewisburg
ENTERTAINMENT
The Poor Taters, Athens
RENTALS
A to Z Rentals, Huntington
LOCATION
Little Moose Ranch, Lewisburg

KRISTEN NICOLE FRODELIUS & NICHOLAS CARL DeMEDICI

PARKERSBURG | 7.29.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Tammie Alexander
Grant & Becky Frodelius

GROOM'S PARENTS
Diane & Butch DeMedici

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Amberlee Christey Photography

MORGANTOWN NATIVES KRISTEN AND NICK met through a mutual friend in 2012. In 2016, Kristen planned a spontaneous trip to New York. She used to live there and liked to visit every once in a while. Nick said he was not able to go, but little did she know that when she was in Central Park—her favorite part of the city—her handsome partner would be in a three-piece suit, down on one knee proposing. To Kristen's surprise, Nick invited their friends and family to dinner, which he had reserved at one of her favorite restaurants. They were married a year later at The Blennerhassett Hotel in Parkersburg. The couple decided to have a wedding weekend of festivities. During their rehearsal dinner, Nick gifted his two cousins rings made of a one-third piece of their late grandfather's wedding band, a photo of their grandparents on their wedding day, and a letter. For the ceremony, the bride wore an ivory and jeweled Hayley Paige ball gown with open back detail. The bridesmaids wore Hayley Paige and Sorella Vita dresses in a combination of blush, rose, gold, and champagne. The groom wore classic black pants with a white jacket with black trim. He wore this in honor of the day his grandparents got married in 1950. The bride was escorted down the aisle by her mother to "First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" by Johnny Cash. The couple did a rose presentation to their mothers. During the ceremony, the couple presented a box they built together, and they put letters inside that they wrote to each other and a bottle of wine. They plan to open the box on their fifth anniversary. At the reception, the couple shared their first dance to "Kiss From A Rose" by Seal. Guests enjoyed a naked funfetti cake from Momofuku Milk Bar from New York. The couple honeymooned in Italy and Greece.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Vow Boutique, Morgantown
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
The Vow Boutique, Morgantown
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Daniel's of Morgantown, Morgantown
COORDINATOR
Emily Davenport, The Blennerhassett Hotel, Parkersburg
FLOWERS
Bella Fiore, Morgantown
CATERER
The Blennerhassett Hotel, Parkersburg
CAKE
Momofuku Milk Bar, New York, NY
ENTERTAINMENT
The Soul Miners, Morgantown
VIDEOGRAPHER
Gonzalez Videography
LOCATION
The Blennerhassett Hotel, Parkersburg

SPRING/SUMMER 2018 An EDITOR'S Pick SEE PAGE 38

KATELYN GOMPERS & ALEXANDER PELUCHETTE

WHEELING | 8.19.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Sarah & Tom Gompers

GROOM'S PARENTS
Nancy & Paul Peluchette

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
James Carl Photography

ALTHOUGH THEIR FAMILIES HAVE KNOWN ONE ANOTHER FOR GENERATIONS, Katelyn Gompers and Alexander Peluchette didn't meet until a mutual friend introduced them at West Virginia University. Not surprisingly, they quickly found they had a lot in common and began dating. The couple resided in Morgantown while Alex finished his bachelor's degree and Katelyn attended pharmacy school, then carried on a long distance relationship as she lived in Washington, D.C. and he resided in Wheeling to help with the family business. Alex surprised Katelyn with a ring on the weekend of the September 2017 WVU/Brigham Young University game in D.C. They booked Wheeling's St. Joseph's Cathedral for the ceremony, choosing minimal floral arrangements so as not to distract from the church's medieval-style stained glass windows, ornate altar, and huge mural. Katelyn didn't want to risk an outdoor event for the reception so the couple booked a ballroom at Oglebay, renting chandeliers and white drapes for the ceiling. Katelyn wore a form-fitting dress covered in layers of lace with straps, a deep V-neck in the front, an open back, and cutouts on the sides. Alex donned a traditional black tuxedo for the ceremony and an old-school white jacket for the reception. The couple marked their nuptials with a full Catholic mass, which included readings by one of Katelyn's brothers and one of Alex's groomsmen, as well as songs by Katelyn's aunts. Oglebay catering staff offered guests salmon in a chardonnay butter sauce salmon served with mashed potatoes and haricot verts, or a roasted beef tenderloin served with stone-ground grits and grilled asparagus. Dessert was a five-tier white cake with almond icing, and guests also enjoyed a cookie table with treats prepared by the couple's family. Guests danced the night away to the sounds of the Top 40 cover band Hit Play. The couple honeymooned at a resort in Jamaica and are now making their home in Wheeling.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Bridal Beginnings, Pittsburgh, PA
BRIDESMAID DRESSES
Bella Bridesmaids, Pittsburgh, PA
MAKEUP
Fleiria Glam Bar, Pittsburgh, PA
GROOM & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Sorelle Bridal Salon, Washington, PA
FLOWERS
Bellisima Floral Shop, Wheeling
CATERER
Oglebay, Wheeling
ENTERTAINMENT
Hit Play, Wheeling
CEREMONY VENUE
St. Joseph's Cathedral, Wheeling
RECEPTION VENUE
Oglebay, Wheeling

KELSEY PAGE HARPER & TIMOTHY LUCAS WHITNEY

SUMMERSVILLE | 6.24.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Susie & Greg Harper

GROOM'S PARENTS
Erica & Tim Whitney

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
CP Imagery

KELSEY, A DENTAL HYGIENIST FROM MT. NEBO, and Luke, an industrial electrician from Strange Creek, met thanks to one of Kelsey's friends. After dating for a few years, Luke took Kelsey to Bricks and Barrels in Charleston and then took her down on the levee, where they danced to "Mean To Me" by Brett Eldridge. They were married at The Wilderness Lodge in Summersville. The bride wore a ball gown with a beaded bodice and a layered chiffon skirt. The groom wore light gray pants, a vest with ivory button down shirt, and light gray tie. During the ceremony, the bride was escorted by her father down a beautiful stone staircase. The altar was made by the bride's father, and the couple got married overlooking the Gauley River. At the reception, the couple shared their first dance to Ed Sheeran's "Tenerife Sea." The bride and her father surprised the guests with their choreographed father-daughter dance. The dance floor was made by the groom and his brothers and father. The three-tiered white cake had greenery and three cabbage roses trailing up and a golden "Mr. and Mrs. Whitney" topper and stood on the bride's grandmother's antique milk glass cake stand. After a night of fun games and dancing, guests went home with homemade his and hers favorite cookies made by the bride, matron of honor, and bride's mother. His were white chocolate macadamia nut cookies, and hers were peanut butter cookies. The couple honeymooned at Secrets Maroma Beach in Mexico. They now reside in Huntington.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Boutique by B.Belle Events, Charleston
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Azazie.com
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
JCPenny, Morgantown
FLOWERS
Creative Cakes and Floral, Summersville
CATERER
Pasquale's, Beckley
CAKE
Creative Cake and Floral, Summersville
ENTERTAINMENT
Will Shumate, Beckley
LOCATION
The Wilderness Lodge, Summersville

KATHERYNE ELIZABETH HAWKINS & PATRICK MICHEAL POPP

DAVIS | 7.15.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Patsy & Daniel Hawkins

GROOM'S PARENTS
Kathy McClain & Micheal Popp

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Laurel Hill Photography

"THAT'S A CUTE PUG." THE NOTE THAT STARTED IT ALL BETWEEN KATHERYNE and Patrick in the spring of 2015. After a few weeks of conversing, they quickly discovered their shared love and interest in things such as dogs, art, craft beer, and the beauty of West Virginia. They met in person for the first time at Taylor Books in Charleston that May and have been inseparable ever since. On July 15, 2016, on Bear Rocks in the Dolly Sods Wilderness Area, Patrick proposed to Katheryne with a sapphire claddagh ring; a promise of their future and symbol of their pasts. One year later, they held their ceremony overlooking Canaan Valley above the falls in Blackwater Falls State Park. The bride's A-line gown featured a scalloped off-the-shoulder bodice and delicate beaded lace appliqué. The groom sported a silver button-down shirt, gray slacks, vest, and fedora. The bridesmaids wore flowing floor-length, one-shoulder navy dresses with lace detailing, which were complemented by the groomsmen's attire of navy shirts, gray slacks, suspenders, and newsboy caps. Before the ceremony, the bride and groom exchanged gifts and letters with each other and their loved ones. Patrick gifted a glass of Laphroaig Scotch Whiskey, or "liquid courage," to Katheryne before the ceremony started. During the ceremony, the couple exchanged vows and performed both handfasting and wine box ceremonies. At the reception, the couple shared their first dance to "La Vie En Rose" by Louis Armstrong. Centerpieces featuring white lilies, thistles, and lush greenery cascaded from milk glass pedestal bowls. The white three-tiered Euro-style marble cake was trimmed in navy accents and embellished with thistle floral decorations. The bride surprised the groom with a hidden Boba Fett—the groom's favorite Star Wars character—that appeared as if it were stuck under the edge of the cake. After dinner, the dancing continued into the night. Festivities concluded with a sparkler send-off of the newlyweds.

BRIDE'S GOWN
David's Bridal, Charleston
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
David's Bridal, Charleston
HAIR
Angie's Salon, Spencer
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
JCPenny, Charleston
OFFICIANT
Reverend Rosetta Redden Smith, United Disciples of Christ Church, Charleston
FLOWERS
Forget Me Not, Spencer
CATERER
Canaan Valley Resort
Blackwater Falls State Park, Davis
CAKE
Cakes by Appointment, Charleston
ENTERTAINMENT
BRAVO-Live DJ, Hurricane
LOCATION
Blackwater Falls State Park, Davis

KELLY MICHELLE HAYES & DEREK RYAN BONNER

MORGANTOWN | 6.17.17

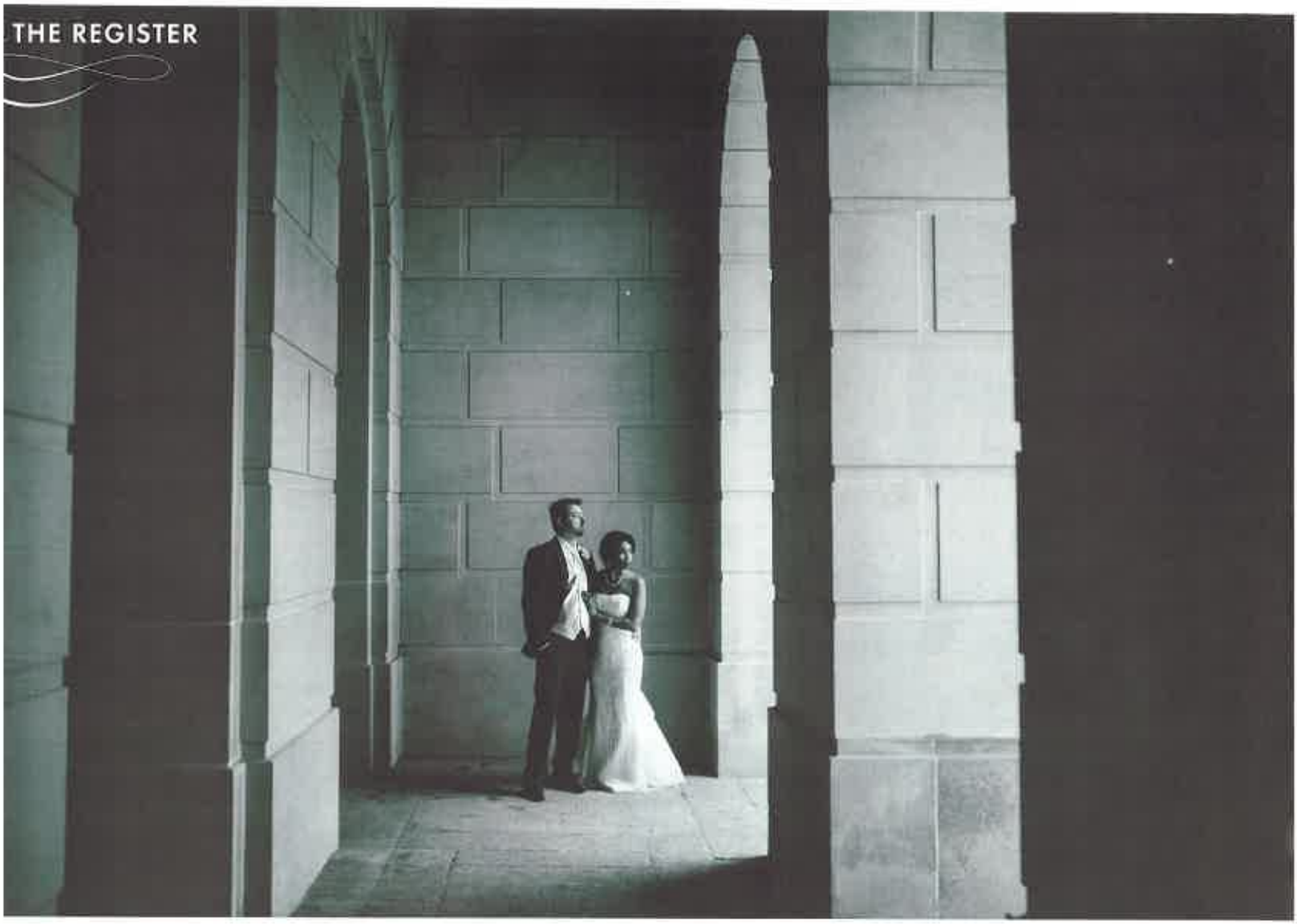
BRIDE'S PARENTS
Marti & Jay Hayes

GROOM'S PARENTS
Christie & Danny Bonner

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Kristin Hurley Photography

MUTUAL FRIENDS INTRODUCED WESTON NATIVE KELLY and Morgantown native Derek in 2012. Three years later, Derek got down on one knee and proposed in front of the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree in New York City. The couple's wedding ceremony took place at Wesley United Methodist Church in Morgantown, where the bride, wearing an ivory Mori Lee gown adorned with Alençon lace appliques and crystal beading and accessorized by a crystal beaded sash, walked down the aisle on the arm of her father. The bridesmaids wore mix-and-match navy silk chiffon dresses and the groom and groomsmen wore matching navy suits. The bride's bouquet was a mix of pink peonies. The couple chose to host their reception in the Chestnut Ridge Ballroom at Lakeview Golf Resort & Spa. Tables were lined with navy overlays and accented with gold glitter chargers and hot pink napkins, topped with a gold glitter metal West Virginia ornament designed and produced by the bride's father. Bill Nevin, the voice of the Pride of West Virginia and announcer of WVU sporting events, helped to "roll out the red carpet" and welcome the newly married couple. They shared their first dance to Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World," before family and friends packed the dance floor for the remainder of the reception. Their four-tiered white wedding cake was adorned with pink peonies and roses and topped with a gold monogram. The night ended in true Mountaineer fashion with the playing of John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads." The couple honeymooned on a Royal Caribbean Cruise to the eastern Caribbean. The couple reside in Morgantown, where Kelly works in Information Technology Services at WVU and Derek works in the payment services office at WVU.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Babette's, Bridgeville, PA
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
J.Crew
GROOM'S ATTIRE
Express, Pittsburgh, PA
GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Daniels of Morgantown, Morgantown
WEDDING COORDINATOR
Lauren Thomas, Lakeview Golf Resort & Spa, Morgantown
FLOWERS
Zia Flower and Steph Hale, Morgantown
CATERER
Lakeview Golf Resort & Spa, Morgantown
CAKE
Bonnie Belle's Pastries, Clarksburg
ENTERTAINMENT
Funomenon, Morgantown
FAVORS
CJ Products, Weston
HAIR & MAKEUP
Nico's Spalon, Morgantown
TRANSPORTATION
Morgantown Trolley, Morgantown
VIDEOGRAPHER
Sparks Productions
CEREMONY
Wesley United Methodist Church, Morgantown
RECEPTION
Lakeview Golf Resort & Spa, Morgantown



LAUREN ANNA JOHNSON & SHAWN MICHAEL AMORY

CHARLESTON | 4.22.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Renea & Larry Johnson

GROOM'S PARENTS
Sandra & Mike Amory

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
The Oberports

LAUREN ANNA, OF PHILADELPHIA, AND SHAWN MICHAEL, OF CHARLESTON, met at work at MRC Global when Shawn Michael dropped paperwork off to Lauren Anna, who worked in the HR department. A few days later, he asked her to lunch. She accepted his invitation mainly because she was hungry, but as it turned out, even though the food was subpar, the conversation more than made up for it. Four years later, they would be on a beach in Florida, after a day spent fishing on a private chartered expedition, when Shawn Michael surprised Lauren Anna by proposing. He'd attempted to propose the day before during a sunset walk on the beach, but Lauren Anna wasn't participating. The couple were married at the State Capitol. The bride chose a Justin Alexander ivory pearl wedding gown, and she asked her bridesmaids to choose their own dresses that fit with the couple's Roaring 20s theme. The bride carried a brooch bouquet, and the bridesmaids each had a sola wood bouquet. The bride was escorted down the aisle by her father while a violinist played a jazzy version of "Dream A little Dream of Me." The reception was held at the Woman's Club of Charleston. A dinner of balsamic grilled chicken, butter parsley new potatoes, green beans, and salad was catered by Meticulous Catering before the guests enjoyed a three-tiered Art Deco cake with chocolate, vanilla, and lemon tiers. "Come Rain or Come Shine" by Ray Charles played as the couple danced their first dance. Lauren Anna and Shawn Michael enjoyed a honeymoon in Puerta Plata, Dominican Republic.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Boutique by B.Belle Events
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Tony the Tailor, Charleston
FLOWERS
Susie Kay's Design, Canton, OH
CATERER
Meticulous Catering, Charleston
CAKE
Ceason Ranson Cakes, Ripley
GROOM'S CAKE
Wild Poppy Caterers, Dunbar
ENTERTAINMENT
Alasha Al-Qudwah, Charleston
CEREMONY
West Virginia State Capitol, Charleston
RECEPTION
Woman's Club of Charleston, Charleston

DANICA MARIE KEMPINSKI & ADAM CHRISTOPHER WILBERGER

ASPEN, COLORADO | 8.19.17

WEB EXCLUSIVE • OCTOBER

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Arria Hines & Bernard Kempinski

GROOM'S PARENTS
Mary Ellen Tormey & Jack Wilberger

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Joshua McDonald, ROGUE Film Co.

DANICA, OF WESTON, AND ADAM, OF SEWICKLEY, PENNSYLVANIA, met on Bumble in 2015. Eight months later, Adam sent Danica a text while she was at work and asked her to take an Uber to an undisclosed location. She took a 30-minute ride into the Rocky Mountains and arrived at a beautiful park where Adam and her best friend, a photographer, were waiting. At that moment, she knew what was about to happen and couldn't stop smiling. After what felt like the longest stroll through a park ever (ok, maybe it took all of five minutes), Adam got down on one knee and asked Danica if she would marry him. Her response: "HELL, YES!" The couple got married in a laidback and nontraditional lunchtime ceremony at 11,212 feet on the Wedding Deck at the top of Aspen Mountain in Aspen, Colorado. Marie-Margot Couture created the bride's custom lace wedding gown, which Danica designed herself with off-the-shoulder bell sleeves. The groom's brown herringbone suit complemented the natural and earthy tones of the venue. The ceremony was performed by Danica's older brother, and her younger brother served as the ring and dog bearer. After being pronounced newlyweds, the couple rode a gondola down the mountain. The reception was held in the Aspen Mountain Club, with panoramic views of the Rocky Mountains. The couple designated each table as a type of crystal and then provided crystals to their guests to share in the good energy of the day. In lieu of a wedding cake, Adam and Danica served a variety of Voodoo Doughnuts. Both of the couple's parents gave toasts, followed by a toast from Danica's little brother, Abia. The couple shared their first dance to "Swept Away" by the Avett Brothers. After a reception filled with joyful dancing and singing, guests loaded into the gondola before an after-party on the Shadow Mountain Terrace at the Limelight Hotel in Aspen. Adam and Danica travelled to Costa Rica for their honeymoon before returning to Denver, where they reside.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Marie-Margot Couture, Denver, CO
GROOM'S ATTIRE
Suitsupply, Denver, CO
WEDDING PLANNER
Aimee Monihan, Mountain Occasions, Denver, CO
FLOWERS
Two Leaves & A Bloom, Denver, CO
CATERER
The Little Nell, Aspen, CO
ENTERTAINMENT
Thunder & Rain, Golden, CO
CEREMONY
Aspen Mountain, Aspen, CO
RECEPTION
The Aspen Mountain Club, Aspen, CO

JENNIFER LYNN KOAY & CLAYTON CHAPMAN WHITE

MORGANTOWN | 5.20.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Mary Ellen & Jack Koay

GROOM'S PARENTS
Judy Hodgson
Phillip & Laurie White

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Rebecca Devono Photography

JENNIFER AND CLAYTON FIRST MET AFTER CLAYTON MOVED TO FAIRMONT from Little River, Kansas, in 1998 and joined Jennifer's eighth grade class, but they didn't start dating until college. In 2015, the couple were putting up their Christmas tree when Jennifer turned around for the last ornament and found Clayton on one knee with a ring his hand. The couple were married in a traditional ceremony at St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church in Morgantown. Jennifer chose a floor-length, mermaid-style, fully beaded, strapless gown with a sweetheart neckline and a fingertip-length veil adorned with Swarovski crystals. The bridesmaids wore floor-length navy chiffon dresses in various styles from the Alfred Angelo Signature Collection. While the groom chose a navy suit with gray vest and gray tie, his groomsmen donned three-piece gray suits and navy ties. The florals were lush arrangements of roses and hydrangeas. The Morgantown Marriott at Waterfront Place served as the reception venue, where festivities kicked off with a cocktail hour. After the couple's first dance to "I Cross My Heart" By George Strait, they said a few words to the guests before cutting their four-tiered wedding cake. After a delicious dinner and dessert, guests joined the couple on the dance floor and enjoyed a mix of pop, country, rock and roll, and rap music well into the night. They even squeezed in a Beer Barrel Polka for Jennifer's Polish relatives. Guests left with two types of sugar cookies—one in the shape of West Virginia with a heart over the location of Fairmont and the other in the shape of Kansas with a heart over the location of Little River, where Clayton was born and his family still live. The couple visited Hawaii on their honeymoon before returning to Morgantown, where they currently reside.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Bridal Beginning, Mt. Lebanon, PA
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
The Vow, Morgantown
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Daniel's of Morgantown, Morgantown
FLOWERS
Bella Fiore, Morgantown
CATERER
Morgantown Marriott at Waterfront Place, Morgantown
CAKE
Bonnie Belle's, Nutter Fort
GROOM'S CAKE
Almost Heaven Bakery, Bridgeport
ENTERTAINMENT
The Cadillac Jazz band, Pittsburgh, PA
Alex O'Neal, DJ
VIDEOGRAPHER
Cinebird Films
CEREMONY
St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, Morgantown
RECEPTION
Morgantown Marriott at Waterfront Place, Morgantown

PAIGE LEA LAVENDER & NICHOLAS PRESTON WARD

CHARLESTON | 5.20.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Patty & Paul Lavender

GROOM'S PARENT
Anna Ward

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
The Oberports

PAIGE AND NICK, RESIDENTS OF WASHINGTON, D.C., were both born and raised in West Virginia and couldn't imagine tying the knot anywhere else. They started dating in 2008, a year after they first met at West Virginia University. They moved in together in 2013 but were in no rush to wed, often joking they'd get a dog before they got engaged. Pickle, a lab mix, joined their family in July 2015, and one month later Nick proposed while the couple took their pup on her first adventure to Theodore Roosevelt Island. Nick and Paige wed in May 2017 at the University of Charleston's Erma Byrd Art Gallery, with Paige's godfather Jeff Branham officiating the ceremony. Paige wore an embroidered lace & tulle fit and flare gown by Justin Alexander and jewelry given to her by family: pearl earrings from her grandparents June and Bob Petty, and a diamond bracelet she had received from her parents when she completed her master's degree at American University. Her bouquet, a mix of roses and gerbera daisies, featured a flower made from a shirt that belonged to her late grandfather, Bruce Lavender. Nick wore a Vera Wang tux from Men's Wearhouse and carried a pin that belonged to his late grandfather, Frank Curcio. The celebration continued in UC's Riggleman Rotunda, where guests snacked on Spring Hill Pastry Shop "hot dogs," cake pops by Cakes by Appointment, and a three-tier cake made by Paige's aunt, Jean Lavender. Favors included jars of homemade pickles, jam, squash relish and apple butter for the adults, and coloring books with crayons for the kids. The couple and their guests danced the night away, ending their ceremony by singing "Take Me Home, Country Roads." Nick and Paige took off for The Greenbrier for a quick post-wedding getaway, and honeymooned in France in January.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Little White Dress, Myrtle Beach, SC
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Weddington Way
MAKEUP
Meritech Duckett, Makeup by Meritech, LLC, Parkersburg
HAIR
Haylie Peck, Spa Elite, Charleston
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Men's Wearhouse, Charleston
WEDDING PLANNER
Mitzi Stone, Little Black Dress, Parkersburg
FLOWERS
Flowers & More, Marmet
Ron Petty
CATERER
University of Charleston, Charleston
CAKE
Jean Lavender, East Bank
ENTERTAINMENT
Todd Hutchinson, BRAVO-Live DJ, Charleston
FAVORS
Bride's parents
VIDEOGRAPHER
GM Productions
LOCATION
University of Charleston, Charleston

ASHLEY CHRISTINE LEVELLE & ROBERT ASHBEE SYKES

MORGANTOWN | 6.10.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Asuntina Levelle
Robert & Susan Levelle

GROOM'S PARENTS
Karen Sykes
Robert & Nancy Sykes

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Claire Watson Photography

ASHLEY OF MORGANTOWN AND ASHBEE OF KITTY HAWK, NORTH CAROLINA, met on the Outer Banks of North Carolina in 2006. He was building a beach house for Ashley's aunt, and she introduced them. They spent a year dating long distance and then Ashbee moved to Morgantown to attend WVU. In 2016, the day after their 10-year dating anniversary, Ashley and Ashbee were visiting the Outer Banks for the fourth of July holiday at the house where they met, when he took her to a dock overlooking the sound and proposed at sunset. The couple married in Morgantown at St. John University Parish, where Ashley's dad walked her down the aisle to "Simple Gifts" played by John Angotti. The theme of the wedding was black and ivory, simple and elegant. Ashley wore a Pronovias gown adorned with three layers of lace and a veil with matching lace. Ashbee met her at the altar wearing a traditional black tuxedo with a bowtie. The bridal party took pictures on WVU's beautiful downtown campus and then traveled to the reception in the trolley. The reception was held at the Holiday Inn and catered by Atria's restaurant. Ivory lace overlays and black candelabra centerpieces decorated the reception hall. Guests indulged in a three-tiered almond cake served with four varieties of Dippin' Dots at a self-serve station. The couple's families also made more than 4,000 cookies to serve at the traditional cookie table. Favors included cookies in bags stamped with the couple's wedding logo, which was created by the groom. Everyone danced the night away using cutouts of Ashbee's face as props, and ended the night singing "Take Me Home, Country Roads." The couple now lives in Morgantown.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Cami and Franc, Morgantown
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Cami and Franc, Morgantown
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
JoS. A. Bank, Morgantown
WEDDING PLANNER
Dream Creations Event Planning, Morgantown
FLOWERS
Rooted By Design, Morgantown
CATERER
Airia's, Morgantown
CAKE
Bonnie Belle's, Butler Fact
GROOM'S CAKE
Krispy Kreme, Washington, PA
ENTERTAINMENT
John Angotti, Memphis, TN
Dr. Zoot, Pittsburgh, PA
DJ Dave Event Services, Waynesburg, PA
RENTALS
Elite Bridal & Events, Morgantown
OTHER VENDOR
Dippin' Dots, Morgantown
FAVORS
Homemade cookies made by family members
VIDEOGRAPHER
McMillen Photography

JENNIFER MARISA NGUYEN & KAISON ROBERT BALL

SNOWSHOE | 7.15.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Koren & Lomson Nguyen

GROOM'S PARENTS
Kim Reese & Tim Gould

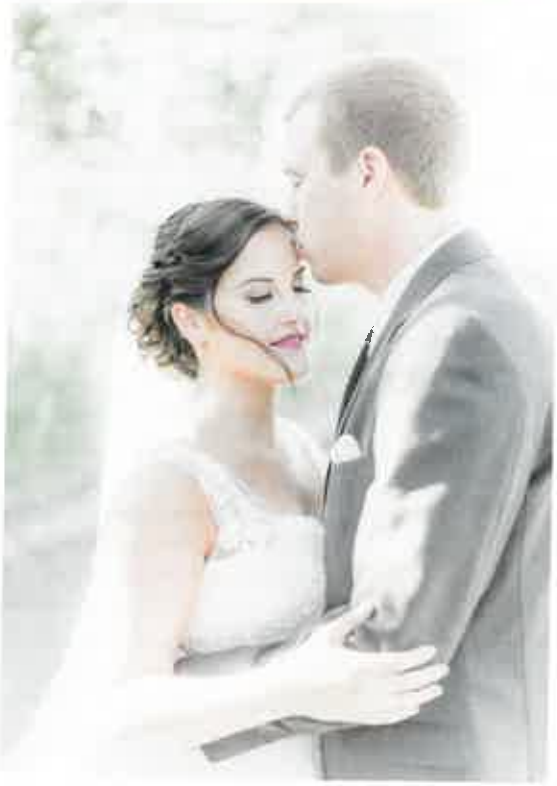
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Hannah Hicks Photography

THE BRIDE, OF GLEN DALE, AND THE GROOM, OF GRAFTON, met in 2012 through mutual friends while attending West Virginia University. To celebrate Jen's graduation in 2016, Kaison threw a party at the couple's new home. In their backyard, surrounded by close friends and family, Kaison gave a speech to Jen's father and then to Jen before proposing on one knee. The bride wore a Maggie Sottero gown, and the bridesmaids picked their own gray dresses to match the neutral color scheme. The groom and groomsmen wore gray suits. The ceremony took place outdoors, overlooking the mountains. The bride walked down the aisle to an instrumental version of "Tale as Old as Time." The couple recited their own vows and, with the help of their mothers, planted a unity tree. The reception was held at the Soaring Eagle Lodge. Guests enjoyed dinner outside on the terrace while dancing took place inside the Hearth Room. The couple's families and bridesmaids helped put together the centerpieces, and Jen DIY-ed much of the wedding in advance, including hand-lettering. The wedding cake was two tiers of white cake with raspberry filling, white buttercream, and gold painted details. In lieu of a groom's cake, the bride surprised the groom with a cigar bar to enjoy outside with his friends. The couple took a belated honeymoon to Puerto Morelos, Mexico, in the fall. Jen is a quality coordinator at WVU Medicine Childen's. Kaison is an authorized Disney vacation planner and works in industrial sales for the Fastenal Company. Together, the couple owns Home Brewed and Company, a hand-lettered goods and lifestyle small business based out of their home in Morgantown.

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

An EDITOR'S Pick

SEE PAGE 37



BRIDE'S GOWN
Sorelle Bridal Salon, Washington, PA
HAIR AND MAKEUP
The Spa at Snowshoe, Snowshoe
GROOM'S ATTIRE
Daniels of Morgantown, Morgantown
PLANNER
Jaime Eilers, Snowshoe
FLOWERS
Gillespie's Flowers and Productions, White Sulphur Springs
CATERER
South Mountain Grille, Snowshoe
CAKE
B Sweet Confectionery, White Sulphur Springs
VIDEOGRAPHY
Gonzalez Videography
ENTERTAINMENT
GS Productions, Inwood
CEREMONY
Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Snowshoe
RECEPTION
Soaring Eagle Lodge, Snowshoe

MEREDITH RAE ORNDORFF & WILLIAM PAUL BREZINSKI

SNOWSHOE | 7.22.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Cathy & Jeff Orndorff

GROOM'S PARENTS
Carrie & Bill Brezinski

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Claire Watson Photography

WILL AND MEREDITH GREW UP ATTENDINGS STATE 4-H CAMPS together at Jackon's Mill in West Virginia. Their paths crossed again when Will moved to Meredith's hometown of Morgantown to attend West Virginia University. Their relationship endured college and three years of long-distance dating while they attended different graduate programs before landing in Arizona where Will popped the question. Their 6-month-old puppy, Luke, delivered the ring to Meredith tied to his collar—his first time being their ring bearer. He would later serve as the couple's ring bearer on their big day. Despite traveling for work and school, West Virginia has always been home for these two. Although planning a wedding from across the country proved difficult, the couple agreed that Snowshoe's mountaintop venue was the perfect location to say "I do." Many small details gave special meaning to their day—from Meredith's sapphire engagement ring as her "something blue" to a pearl heart pin passed down from her great grandmother as her "something old." Her Madison James lace gown featured a sweetheart neckline and long scalloped train. Will and his groomsmen wore navy blue with checkered shirts, while the bridesmaids dressed in sky blue Azazie gowns. The personalized details continued with the handmade flower girl dresses designed and sewn by Meredith's sister Sarah that were featured on her Etsy shop SewnbySarahVA. Will and Meredith agreed that their ceremony should reflect their values and ideals and spent time writing their script and vows together to ensure each word was from the heart. Their outdoor ceremony was followed by a reception under the Big Top at Snowshoe. The couple resides in Tucson, Arizona, where Meredith works as a physical therapist at HealthSouth while Will is completing his Ph.D. in chemistry at the University of Arizona.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Maya Palace, Tucson, AZ
HAIR
Stephanie Poland, Blown Away, Reedsville
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Azazie.com
FLOWER GIRL DRESSES
Handmade by Sarah Sesin
etsy.com/shop/sewnbysarahva
GROOM'S ATTIRE
JoS. A. Bank, Tucson, AZ
GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
JoS. A. Bank, Morgantown
FLOWERS
Flower Garden, Marlinton
Blossoms and Buds, Hillsboro
CATERER
Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Snowshoe
CAKE
Franny King, Waynesburg, PA
ENTERTAINMENT
DJ - Jason Lenhart, Morgantown
Seth Maynard and Frank Mams
LOCATION
Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Snowshoe

WENDY ELAINE PHILLIPS & KEVIN CURTIS WYETH JONES

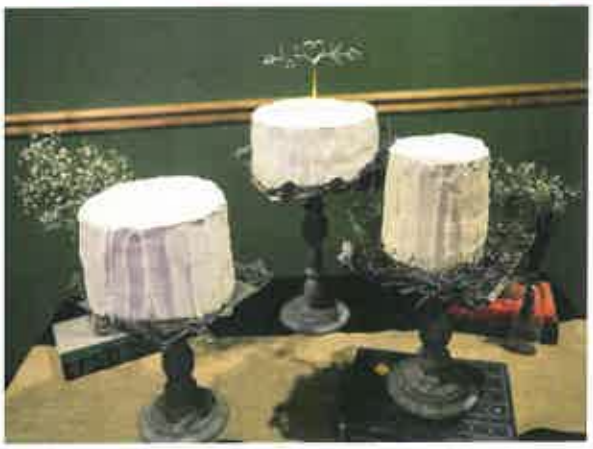
ELKINS | 6.10.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Jan & Ron Phillips

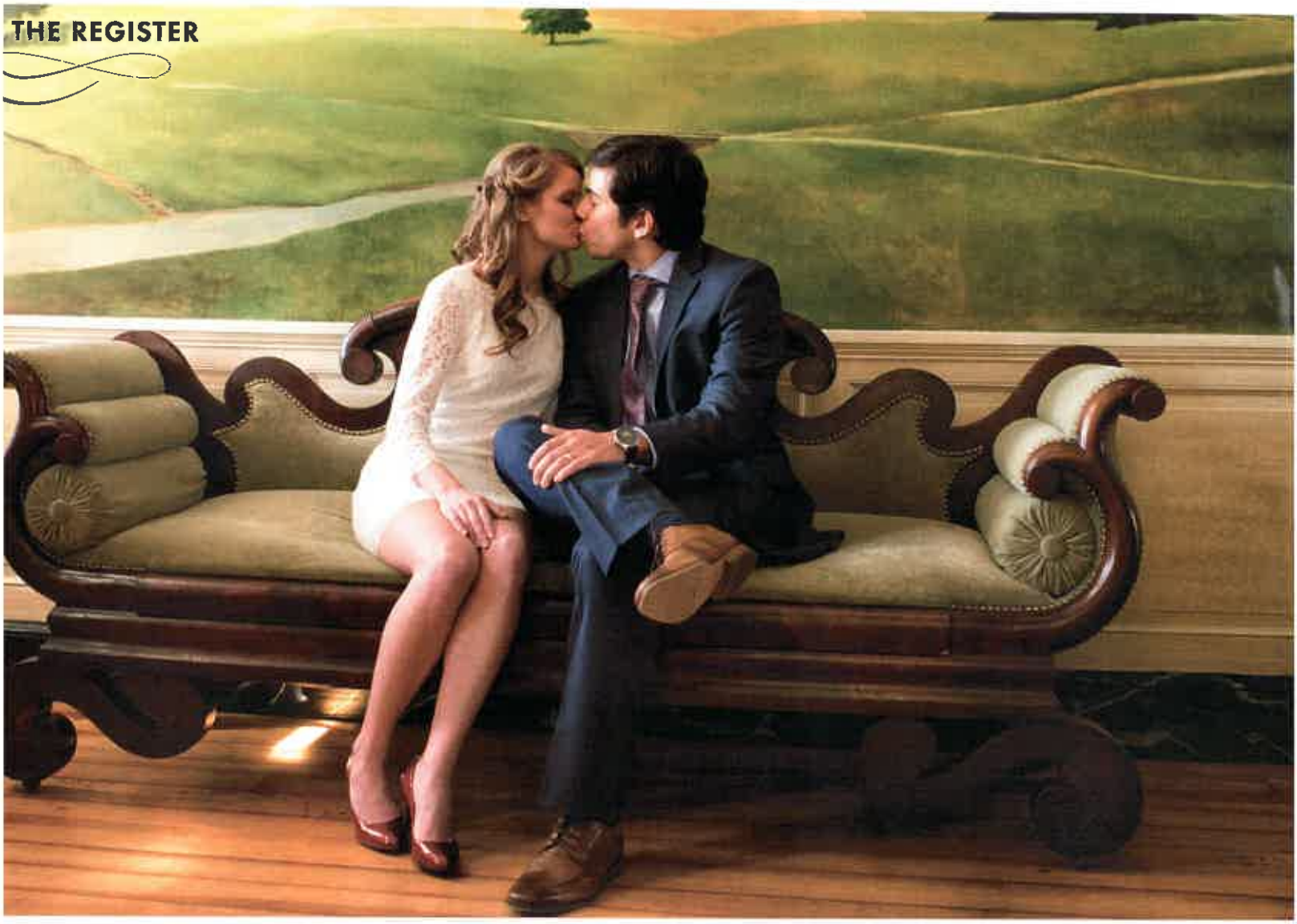
GROOM'S PARENTS
Teresa Cook
Kevin & Chasity Jones

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Pierce Winkler

WENDY, A BELINGTON NATIVE, AND KEVIN, OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, met at Summit Church in Elkins. Their proposal took place at another "summit" when they visited Spruce Knob for the first time. As they looked out at the breathtaking views from the top of the mountain, Kevin pulled a ring out of his pocket and got down on one knee and asked Wendy to marry him. She excitedly said, "yes," which was a good thing, since Kevin had planned a small get-together with family and friends upon their return to Elkins. The couple married at Gandy Dancer Theater in Elkins. The bride wore a strapless gown with a sweetheart neckline beaded in pearls, and the bridesmaids dressed in floor-length gowns that featured textured gray tops and three different colored skirts. The groom wore a charcoal gray three-piece suit with the groomsmen in a similar attire minus the suit jacket. The bride carried a brooch bouquet made by her godmother that included brooches from special women in the bride's life. Bridesmaids' bouquets and floral arrangements contained flowers handmade from old sheet music, accented with dried lavender and cotton stalks. The couple had worship before exchanging vows, which they had written themselves, followed by a foot-washing ceremony. During the reception, there was live entertainment by the groom and his family—and Kevin sang a song he wrote for Wendy. The couple exited to a lavender toss by the guests, who were given homemade strawberry jam made by the bride's mother. For their honeymoon, they traveled to England and Ireland. The couple resides in Belington, where Wendy is a high school math teacher and Kevin is a real estate agent.



BRIDE'S GOWN
David's Bridal, Pittsburgh, PA
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Wishgown.com
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
JCPenney, Bridgeport
WEDDING PLANNER
Debbie Ware, Elkins
CATERER
Gandy Dancer Theater, Elkins
CAKE
Renee Ellis, Elkins
LOCATION
Gandy Dancer Theater, Elkins



CLAIRE KENNEDY REECE & JUAN DIEGO QUINTERO

UNION | 3.9.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Tanya & Philip Reece

GROOM'S PARENTS
Ivana & Francisco Quintero

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Tim Ray Photography

SPANISH BECAME THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE when Monroe County native Claire met Colombian Juan Diego as students at West Virginia University, and a friendship began by trading baked goodies for help in a Spanish literature course. Many cookies and Spanish assignments later, the couple went skydiving and fell in love. On her March 4 birthday, Juan surprised Claire with a mountaintop proposal on the slopes at Snowshoe. She was even more surprised to learn that he had coordinated with her parents to have the wedding just five days later at Elmwood Mansion, the Hugh Caperton House, in Union. The couple was blessed with a beautiful, sunny day. The bride's attire of a long-sleeved ivory lace dress was accessorized with cherry red pumps, pearl earrings, and her great-grandmother's embroidered handkerchief. The hand-tied bridal bouquet featured coral and peach garden roses, red spray roses, pink ranunculas, white lisianthus, seed eucalyptus, and hanging amaranthus. The groom opted for a navy suit and a red tie. The bride was walked down the staircase to the main floor foyer by her father where the groom and wedding guests waited. A letter of blessing from the groom's parents, who attended via Facetime from Bucaramanga, Colombia, was read by the brother of the groom in Spanish and in English, before the couple exchanged traditional vows and Tiffany & Co. rings beneath one of the chandeliers in the double parlor. The parents of the bride hosted a seated dinner at Food and Friends in Lewisburg. The newlyweds enjoyed a honeymoon at The Greenbrier. Juan Diego is a financial associate for Bimbo Bakeries USA, while Claire is a graduate student in speech pathology at West Virginia University. The wedding was the first at Elmwood since its recent restoration.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Belk
GROOM'S ATTIRE
JoS. A. Bank
HAIR & MAKEUP
Guys and Dolls, Rich Creek, VA
FLOWERS
Gillespie's Flowers & Productions, White Sulphur Springs
CATERER
Food and Friends, Lewisburg
CAKE
The Bakery, Lewisburg
CEREMONY
Elmwood Mansion, Union
RECEPTION
Food and Friends, Lewisburg

CHRISTINA LEE REED & BRIAN STEPHEN COOLEY

DAVIS | 5.27.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Patricia & Robert Reed

GROOM'S PARENTS
Linda & the late Dwight Cooley

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Hopkins Studios

CHRISTINA, OF NEW MARTINSVILLE, AND BRIAN, OF WARDENSVILLE, met while attending West Virginia University. Brian taught Christina to trout fish in a stream near Wardensville while they were dating. As they were fishing near that same spot sixteen years later, Christina caught a fish and was ready to move downstream when Brian told her to try his pole—but instead of bait tied to the line, there was an engagement ring. The couple had planned to have an outdoor wedding ceremony at Nelson's Farm in Dryfork, but God had other plans: Rain forced the ceremony to be moved to Bear Paw Lodge, which was transformed with beautiful décor and floral arrangements by Ella & Company. The bride, wearing an ivory lace Essence of Australia gown with a halter neckline, was escorted down the aisle by her special cousin, Jimmy Moore, to the song "A Thousand Years" by The Piano Guys. The bridesmaids wore royal blue floor-length dresses, and the groom and groomsmen wore black tuxedos. The bride carried a bouquet of purple tulips, and the bridesmaids' bouquets were pink tulips. As the couple were pronounced husband and wife, the rain stopped and sun streamed in through the windows. Guests enjoyed a cocktail hour before the reception. The reception began as the bridal party, outfitted with props, was introduced to WWF theme songs for The Honky Tonk Man, Hillbilly Jim, and Rick Flair. The couple were introduced as "Welcome to the Main Event" played and transitioned into Hulk Hogan's theme song, "Real American." Brian wore a red boa and a white t-shirt that said Cooleymania which he ripped off. The couple served a four-tiered ivory buttercream wedding cake. As the night ended, family and friends encircled the newlyweds to sing "Take Me Home, Country Roads." The couple resides in Pickerington, Ohio.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Wendy's Bridal, Columbus, OH
HAIR & MAKEUP
Salon B, Carroll, OH
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Koda's Bridal, Pittsburgh, PA
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Bell's Fine Clothing, Winchester, VA
WEDDING COORDINATOR
Ella & Company, Thomas
FLOWERS
Morning Glory Floral, Thomas
CATERER
Canaan Valley Resort & Conference Center, Davis
CAKE
The Cake Boutique, Winchester, VA
FAVORS
Mountain State Honey, Parsons
EtchedinTimeLLC, Wenatchee, WA
Bargain Mugs, Cazenovia, NY
OFFICIANT
Pastor Michael Funkhouser, Wardensville
REHEARSAL DINNER
Tuscan Grille Catering, Parsons
ENTERTAINMENT
Doc Vincent, Fairmont
LOCATION
Bear Paw Lodge at Canaan Valley Resort, Davis

MORGAN RHEA RICHARDS & MICHAEL JOSEPH BEALS

SOUTH CHARLESTON | 6.24.17

WEB EXCLUSIVE • JULY

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Kathi & Dean Richards

GROOM'S PARENTS
Sally & Chris Beals

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Liz Jordan Photo

MICHAEL, OF FLORIDA, AND MORGAN, OF SOUTH CHARLESTON, met the first day of orientation at Savannah College of Art and Design and decided to start dating underneath the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center in New York City. After graduating, Morgan apprenticed at the Coach Headquarters in New York. While there, Michael was in West Virginia working with Calvin Broyles Jewelers to design a custom engagement ring for Morgan. When Morgan returned to West Virginia to launch her own accessory brand, Michael proposed on December 23, 2015, while Morgan and her family were taking photos in front of the Christmas tree at the State Capitol. The couple were married two years later in an outdoor ceremony at Little Creek Golf Course in South Charleston. The bride wore a cream full-length skirt designed in France with a white sleeveless bodice top that tied in the front with a bow. The bridesmaids carefully hand-picked individualized dresses from Ivor's Trunk. The groom and groomsmen wore custom sport coats and silk/linen pants paired with matching belts and shoes from Tony the Tailor. The bride and bridesmaids carried hydrangea, rose, and anemone bouquets designed by Belle Manjong. The bride walked down the aisle to "Isn't She Lovely." The couple designed their own garden party-themed wedding and reception. Each table had its own custom cake with flavors ranging from butter pecan to French vanilla to strawberry. In addition to the wedding cake, the custom groom's cake was designed with a camera and a Morgan Rhea Jackie bag on top, representing the couple's interests. Guests received personalized leather bracelets from Morgan Rhea, with the inscription on the outside that read, "There is nothing more artistic than loving people" and, on the inside, "Thanks for loving us! Morgan & Michael," as well as handmade wooden thimbles made by Morgan's grandfather. The couple reside in South Charleston.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Boutique by B.Belle Events, Charleston
BRIDESMAIDS' ATTIRE
Ivor's Trunk, Charleston
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Tony the Tailor, Charleston
WEDDING COORDINATOR
Sarah Plants, South Charleston
FLOWERS
The Boutique by B.Belle Events, Charleston
CATERER
Little Creek Golf Course, South Charleston
CAKE
TG Fifty Cakes, London, OH
GROOM'S CAKE
Cakes by Appointment, Petra Vanale, Charleston
ENTERTAINMENT
Tommy & Tevin Southack, South Charleston

SPRING/SUMMER 2018 An EDITOR'S Pick SEE PAGE 49

LESLIE-JOY D. ROMERO & CHARLES MICHAEL HARLOW

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS | 7.29.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Rose & Joe Romero

GROOM'S PARENTS
Judith & David Harlow

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
The Oberports

LESLIE, OF BECKLEY, AND CHASE, OF EAST BANK, met at a Charleston gym in 2013. Leslie was in her medical school rotations and Chase was working as a personal trainer. After months of working out together, they saw each other at a bar, and Chase made his move. In 2016, on a vacation in Napa Valley, Chase proposed on a beautiful sunny day at Frog's Leap Winery. A year later, the couple got married at The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs. The ceremony, held in The Greenbrier Chapel, featured Filipino wedding customs including wedding sponsors, a unity candle, arrhae or coins, a veil, and a cord. The bride chose a Stella York gown and Manolo Blahnik shoes, and the bridesmaids wore Vince Camuto dresses. The groom and groomsmen wore tuxedos by Ralph Lauren. Guests enjoyed a reception in The Greenbrier's Cameo Ballroom. The bride, formerly a professional dancer, choreographed a surprise first dance for the unexpecting guests. It started with a sweet, slow dance to "Can't Take My Eyes Off You" by Joseph Vincent, then Rick Astley's "Never Gonna Give You Up," and ended with Bell Biv Divoe's "Poison." The couple, who now live in Morgantown, are planning a honeymoon trip to Greece. Leslie is an internal medicine and pediatrics physician, and Chase is a registered nurse.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Boutique by B.Bella Events, Charleston
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Online
GROOM'S ATTIRE
Ralph Lauren, White Sulphur Springs
PLANNER
Whitney Mills and Maren White, The Greenbrier
FLOWERS
Gillespie's Flowers & Productions, White Sulphur Springs
CATERER
The Greenbrier, White Sulphur Springs
CAKE
The Greenbrier, White Sulphur Springs
CEREMONY MUSIC
Four Seasons String Quartet, Glasgow, VA
RECEPTION ENTERTAINMENT
Another Level, Richmond, VA
VIDEOGRAPHER
EJF Video Productions, Beckley
CEREMONY
The Greenbrier Chapel, White Sulphur Springs

MOLLY ELIZABETH SEIDLER & ALEXANDER THOMAS CAUGHRAN

LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY | 5.13.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Sharon & David Seidler

GROOM'S PARENTS
Martha & Don Caughran

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
The Oberports

MOLLY, OF CHARLESTON, AND ALEX, OF CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE, met in 2014 over a bet. Alex lost the bet and started to pay off his debt with their first date. On November 25, 2016, Alex proposed in front of a graveyard on Molly's family farm with a little help from their puppy. The couple chose the 21c Museum Hotel in Lexington, Kentucky, for their wedding venue—a unique location with an art exhibit called "Hibridity: The Supernatural" that displays taxidermied animals. The bride wore a Calla Blanche gown with a deep V-neck and back with shimmering layers of polka dots and plaid and had three custom fascinators made from the material leftover from alterations to her wedding gown. The bridesmaids picked their own purple cocktail dresses. The groom and groomsmen donned gray tuxedos with purple vests and ties. The couple had an open bar before the ceremony, which significantly helped in getting friends and family to the site on time. The couple handmade a geometric wooden backdrop, which was decorated with flowers and candles. The bride was escorted down the aisle by her parents to an acoustic arrangement of love songs by The Beatles. Molly's cousin officiated the eight-minute-long ceremony, and afterward the space was quickly converted into a reception site. A three-tiered geometric wedding cake and an elaborate groom's cake decorated as a Tennessee Volunteer cake with a bite taken out and University of Kentucky cat paw prints walking across the top were served to guests. The bride's mother created the table décor with succulents that also served as wedding favors. The night ended on the dance floor to Harry Nilsson's "F*ck you song," and around 11 p.m., the festivities moved to a bar across the street. The couple honeymooned in Barcelona, Spain, and Tenerife Canary Islands.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The White Dress of Lexington, Lexington, KY
BRIDE'S FASCINATORS
The Dressmaker's Closet, Charleston
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
JoS. A. Bank, Huntington
FLOWERS
Sharon Seidler, Charleston
CATERER
Lockbox, Lexington, KY
WEDDING CAKE
Confused Confections Bakehouse, Lexington, KY
GROOM'S CAKE
Confused Confections Bakehouse, Lexington, KY
ENTERTAINMENT
Brandon Woolum Sound and Lighting, Nashville, TN
LOCATION
21c Museum Hotel, Lexington, KY

CARLY JEAN SETTLE & JARED ALAN PROCTOR

PARKERSBURG | 5.20.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Cindy & Bobby Settle

GROOM'S PARENTS
Judy & Jeff Proctor

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Mark Webb Photography

CARLY AND JARED MET AT CHURCH WHEN THEY WERE BOTH IN ELEMENTARY school and began dating while in college. Their engagement took place under the sparkling lights of the fireworks outside of Cinderella's Castle at Disney's Magic Kingdom. Two years after that magical night, the couple was married at the historic Blennerhassett Hotel in Parkersburg. On a sunny May afternoon, the bride was escorted down the aisle by her father. After exchanging traditional vows and reading of Scripture, the couple took part in a unity ceremony. This ceremony involved braiding a cord of three strands into a cross made from wood salvaged from their flooded church. As they braided the cords, a pre-recorded duet of "Bless the Broken Road," sung by the bride and groom, played in the background. The bride's "something old" for this special day was a handkerchief made by her grandmother, who passed away when the bride was young. This handkerchief was unique because it had been hand-sewn and given to the groom's parents when Jared was born. The reception was also held at The Blennerhassett Hotel, where guests dined on a plated dinner and spent the evening dancing and celebrating the couple. Carly and Jared, who are both accountants, could not have wished for a more perfect "merger"! The couple honeymooned in Charleston, South Carolina, and now reside in Elkview.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Boutique by B.Belle Events, Charleston
FLOWERS
Logan Taylor, Charleston
OFFICIANT
Pastor Lee Swor
CATERER
The Blennerhassett Hotel, Parkersburg
CAKE
Sam's Club, Parkersburg
ENTERTAINMENT
Premier Productions, Parkersburg
RENTALS
Little Black Dress Events, Parkersburg
Crown Event Rentals, Parkersburg
INVITATIONS
Yours Truly Invitations, Parkersburg
LOCATION
The Blennerhassett Hotel, Parkersburg

McKINZI ELIZABETH STRAUB & NATHAN PAUL WEESE

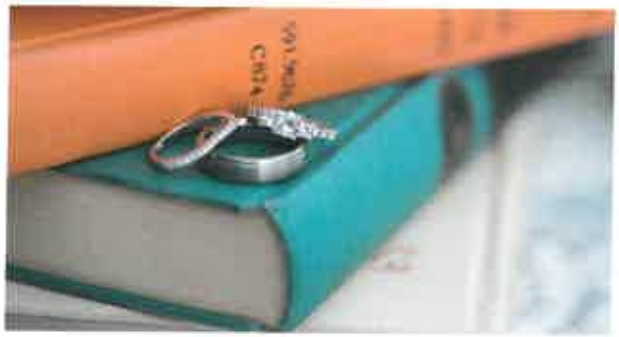
REEDSVILLE | 6.17.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Brenda & Doug Straub

GROOM'S PARENTS
Marsha & Ronald Weese

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
CP Imagery

MCKINZI AND NATE MET IN COLLEGE THROUGH MCKINZI'S TWIN SISTER, Miranda, but it wasn't until 2014 when McKinzi and Nate were both in graduate school that they started dating. In 2016, Nate bought McKinzi, a longtime horse lover, tickets to see the Preakness. They walked down to the track to watch the horses cross the finish line in one of the earlier races of the day, and after the horses thundered past, Nate popped the question. McKinzi, of course, said "yes." The couple were married at Chestnut Hill Farm in Reedsville. The bride chose an ivory beaded mermaid dress that was backless and complemented it with three strands of pearls. The bridesmaids wore gold full-length dresses, and the groom and groomsmen donned black tuxes, with the groom wearing an emerald green tie and vest and the groomsmen wearing gold ties and vests. The ceremony took place outdoors and the bride walked down the aisle with her father and her dog of 14 years. The couple exchanged their own vows as their good friend Daniel Whitlow officiated. They lit unity candles handmade by the bride's aunt in candlesticks handmade by the bride's grandfather. The aisle runner said a sweet message to the father of the bride: "Dad, of all the walks we've taken, this is the one I'll remember forever." Bridesmaids made their own bouquets and boutonnieres for the groomsmen. The couple's wedding was predominantly DIY and laid back. Instead of dancing, the couple had a bonfire and lawn games, including cornhole, ladderball, lawn jenga, and badminton. There were beautiful lounge areas set up in various places in the field. Guests gave the couple a send-off with LED-lit balloons released into the night sky. The couple spent their honeymoon in Ocho Rios, Jamaica.



BRIDE'S GOWN
Cord and Frame, Morgantown
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Lulus, online
GROOM'S AND GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Daniel's of Morgantown, Morgantown
OFFICIANT
Daniel Whitlow, Washington, PA
FLOWERS
Global Rose, online
CATERER
Frosted Catering, Morgantown
CAKE
Olivia Moran, Parkersburg
ENTERTAINMENT
Mike Atkinson, Ashburn, VA
Mountaineer Entertainment, Morgantown
DECOR
The Mustard Couch, Morgantown
LOCATION
Chestnut Hill Farm, Reedsville

LEAH BLAIR STUTLER & CODY WISE SIERS

BRIDGEPORT | 8.5.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Sharon & James Stutler

GROOM'S PARENTS
Angela & Kevin Siers

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Tyler Maxwell

LEAH, OF BRIDGEPORT, AND CODY, OF PARKERSBURG, met while attending Alderson Broaddus University in Philippi. After cooking dinner together and enjoying the meal on their porch on a beautiful spring evening, Cody bent down to pick something up. He pulled a ring out of his boot and proposed. The couple were married at Simpson Creek Baptist Church in Bridgeport. The bride wore a white sleeveless satin ball gown with a fitted bodice and a scoop neckline and a skirt that fell into soft folds ending in a cathedral train. The gown featured a basque waistline and the bodice was embellished with pearl and sequin beading. The bride accessorized with a pearl and rhinestone necklace and matching earrings given to her by her mother. The bridesmaids picked their own dresses. The groom and groomsmen wore black suits. The couple wrote their own vows and tied a fisherman's knot with red and white rope to symbolize becoming stronger through hardship, because that kind of knot becomes tighter when pulled. The reception was held at Via Veneto in Bridgeport, where the bridal party were introduced to "Thunderstruck" by AC/DC, followed by the couple's first dance to "I Cross My Heart" by George Strait. Dinner consisted of chicken parmigiana served over pasta, fresh green beans, and a house salad. The couple were toasted with a champagne toast by the maid of honor, the best man, and the bride's father. The couple traveled to Smoke Hole Caverns for their honeymoon.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Purchased new from a friend
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Faye's Boutique, Vienna
FLOWERS
Clarksburg City Florist, Clarksburg
CATERER
Via Veneto, Bridgeport
CAKE
Bonnie Belle's, Nutter Fort
ENTERTAINMENT
Dynamic Entertainment and Lighting, Morgantown
FAVORS
Cheapfavorshop.com
CEREMONY
Simpson Creek Baptist Church, Bridgeport
RECEPTION
Via Veneto, Bridgeport

JESSICA MARIE TACKETT & GAVIN JAY NAPIER

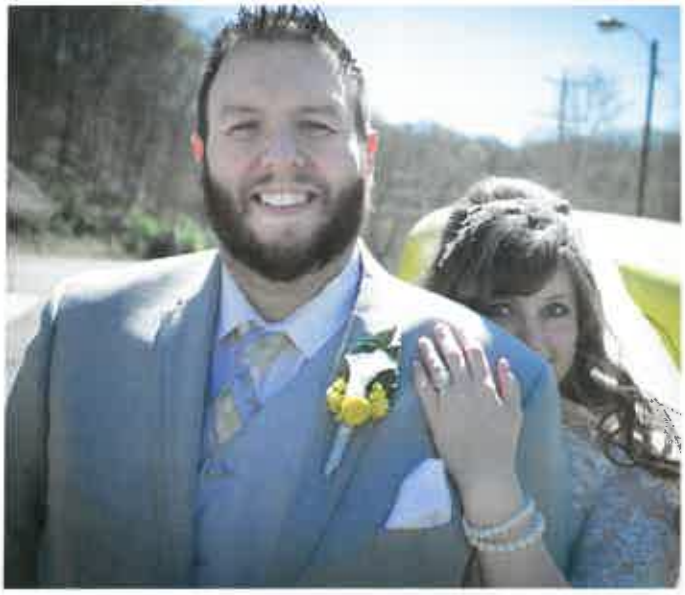
HUNTINGTON | 4.8.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Robin & Joe Tackett

GROOM'S PARENTS
Brenda & Noel Napier

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Oliver Creative Photography

JESSICA, OF BARBOURSVILLE, AND GAVIN, OF LOGAN, met at an open house at Fellowship Baptist Church. Not long after, after a nice dinner and romantic drive around town, Gavin found himself down on one knee proposing with a ring he had designed. After Jessica said "yes," they slow danced in the dining room. The couple were married at Olive Missionary Baptist Church in Huntington and had their reception at Fellowship Baptist Church in Barboursville. The bride custom designed her own wedding dress. The A-line gown showcased many design features that included lace, ruffles, and gemstones. The groom donned a gray tuxedo with a vest in a herringbone pattern and wore yellow Chuck Taylors. The bride's four bridesmaids wore long yellow dresses. Jessica walked down the aisle, which was lined in forsythia, on her father's arm to "Canon in D." The officiant, who had been the bride's pastor for 20 years, stood with his back to the guests so that the couple faced the pews. Instead of lighting a unity candle, the couple built a custom cross with the pastor. Jessica and Gavin arrived at the reception, which was a church family affair, in a 1930s yellow truck. The three-tiered wedding cake in flavors of lemon and strawberry was topped with a cake topper of the bride's cats, Levi and Gabby, and was placed in front of a backdrop that told the couple's story. Jessica and Gavin honeymooned in Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia. The couple reside in Huntington, where Jessica is a HR director for Goodwill Industries of KYOWVA and Gavin is a massage therapist for Pure Serenity Spa and the administrative director at Fellowship Baptist Church.



BRIDE'S GOWN
RoseTree Boutique, Ceredo
BRIDESMAIDS' ATTIRE
David's Bridal
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
JoS. A. Bank
PLANNER
Teresa Cassity & Robin Tackett, Barboursville
FLOWERS
Robin Tackett, Barboursville
CATERER
Fellowship Baptist Church Women's Society, Barboursville
CAKE
Susan Hicks, Barboursville
GROOM'S CAKE
Susan Hicks, Barboursville
ENTERTAINMENT
Drew and Sarah Navy, Barboursville
CEREMONY
Olive Missionary Baptist Church, Huntington
RECEPTION
Fellowship Baptist Church, Barboursville

LESLEY ERIN TAYLOR & ERIC HENRY WEISS

MILTON | 7.29.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Kathy & Ronald Taylor

GROOM'S PARENTS
Colleen & Tom Weiss
Steve & Geneva Weiss

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Emily Ferguson Photography

LESLEY, OF CROSS LANES, AND ERIC, OF BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA, met by chance. He was visiting a friend at West Virginia University, where she went to school, and they struck up a conversation at a party. Lesley had been expecting a proposal for a while, and Eric tried his best to make it a surprise. She had just gotten home from working a night shift, and Eric was about to go to work. He asked Lesley to go outside and see what their dog, Hopper, did in the yard. When she went outside, the words "Marry me?" were written with leaves. The couple were married at The Maylon House in Milton. The bride chose a Maggie Sottero vintage-inspired beaded sheath gown with an illusion keyhole back and scalloped edges, while the bridesmaids wore varying shades and styles of blue and gray dresses. The groom's attire consisted of a gray Vera Wang suit with a lighter gray vest and ivory tie, and the groomsmen wore light gray vests and dress pants with dusty blue ties. The bride and bridesmaids carried bouquets that consisted of a mix of soft whites and blush-colored flowers and greenery. During their outdoor ceremony, the couple performed a glass-mixing tribute that was then sent off and made into a vase. The reception moved indoors and featured garden themed floral centerpieces with geometric accents. The couple were announced as husband and wife then shared their first dance to "Say You Won't Let Go" by James Arthur. There was an impromptu dance-off between the bride's father and brother, and the debate is still going on who was the winner. After a buffet of steak and chicken was served, guests enjoyed the four-tiered ruffled blue ombre wedding cake and the groom's cake, which was a replica of a frosted beer mug. The couple traveled to Munich and Dublin for their honeymoon and currently reside in Cross Lanes.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Nandel's Bridal, Eleanor
BRIDESMAIDS' ATTIRE
David's Bridal, South Charleston
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Men's Wearhouse, South Charleston
FLOWERS
Flowers on Olde Main, St. Albans
CATERER
The Maylon House, Milton
WEDDING CAKE
Rock City Cake Company, Charleston
GROOM'S CAKE
Tina Suchy, St. Albans
ENTERTAINMENT
Party Time DJ, Ripley
UNITY VASE
Mountain Blown Glass, Estes Park, CO
LOCATION
The Maylon House, Milton

BROGAN ALLEGRA WALTERS & DANIEL STEPHEN FULKS

HUNTINGTON | 5.27.17

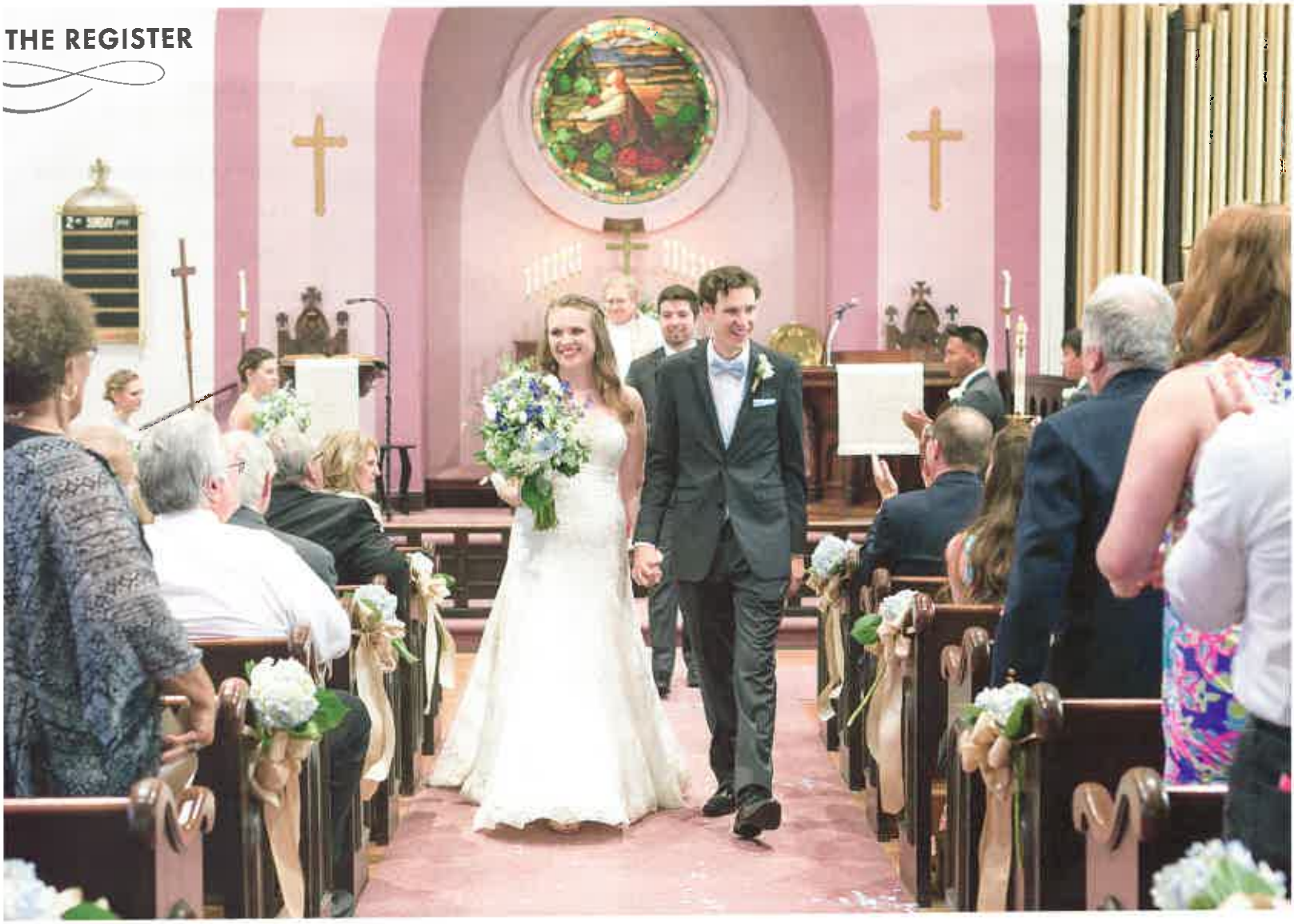
BRIDE'S PARENTS
Terri & Torin Walters

GROOM'S PARENTS
Nancy & Todd Fulks

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Brittany Anderson Photography

HUNTINGTON NATIVE BROGAN AND CLARKSBURG NATIVE DANO met at West Virginia University School of Medicine interview day in September 2013. Almost three years later, they got engaged at Brogan's apartment over breakfast for dinner. The couple married at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Huntington. The bride chose an elegantly classic strapless gown, and the bridesmaids wore simple halter-style dresses in blush tones. The bride wore a simple gold bracelet to match the groom's cufflinks, both bearing the Italian symbol for love and marriage. The bridal party carried all white bouquets of hydrangeas and roses with gold accents. The groom and groomsmen wore classic tuxedos, but the groom changed from a black jacket to a white jacket for the reception. After a traditional Catholic ceremony, a reception was held at Brad Smith Foundation Hall in Huntington and was catered by the bride's family's restaurant, La Famiglia. The couple danced their first dance to "Tupelo Honey" by Van Morrison, with Santa Cruz of Charleston providing the entertainment. The tables were adorned with beautiful arrangements of white hydrangeas and roses in varying sizes of gold vases, and elegant monogrammed napkins were placed on top of gold chargers at each place setting. A simple four-tiered white wedding cake was served. After the reception, the celebration continued into the night with an after-party at the bride's house by the pool. After a honeymoon to Antigua, the couple returned to Knoxville, Tennessee, where Brogan is completing her OB/GYN residency and Dano is finishing his residency in radiology.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Ivy Bridal Studio, Columbus, OH
BRIDESMAIDS' ATTIRE
David's Bridal, Charleston
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Men's Wearhouse, Charleston
PLANNER
Marlene Sims, Huntington
FLOWERS
Marlene Sims, Huntington
CATERER
Ralph Hagy, La Famiglia, Huntington
CAKE
Spring Hill Bakery, South Charleston
ENTERTAINMENT
Santa Cruz, Charleston
CEREMONY
St. Joseph Catholic Church, Huntington
RECEPTION
Brad Smith Foundation Hall, Huntington



SARAH ALLISON WHITE & JOHN CHRISTIAN LUSTREA

SHEPHERDSTOWN | 6.24.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Laura White
Scott & Kim Miller

GROOM'S PARENTS
Anita & Mike Murphy
Robert Lustrea

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Stacy Smith Evans

ON A BEAUTIFUL WEST VIRGINIA DAY UNDER A BLUE SKY AND A GOLDEN SUN, Sarah White and John Lustrea were united in marriage in Shepherdstown. Their love story began two years earlier when they met while working in the summer for the National Park Service in Harpers Ferry. Their relationship continued as Sarah returned to WVU to finish her degree in medical lab science and John headed back to South Carolina to finish his master's degree in public history. In the summer of 2016, John proposed to Sarah on a beautiful overlook in Shenandoah National Park. Sarah always dreamed of being married in the Reformed Church in Shepherdstown, which sits on land deeded by her ancestors who were some of the area's earliest settlers. Her grandparents were married at the church in 1946. Growing up, Sarah loved hearing the story told by her grandfather that when he walked to the church, the streets were lined with people. He thought there was a parade, but was told, "No, a Cookus woman hasn't been married here in 70 years—we want to see it!" Now, 71 years later, Sarah and John have carried on the tradition. The reception followed at the Barn at York Hill in Shenandoah Junction. Each table was named after a national park that they have visited. The dessert table included not only a beautiful cake, but also cupcakes, gold dusted macaroons, hand-painted sugar cookies, and raspberry linzer cookies. The bride surprised the groom with a cake in the shape of a basketball of his favorite team, the Chicago Bulls. A friend of the groom provided music for evening. The perfect day ended with a sparkler send off as the couple was whisked away. Sarah and John wanted to make sure out-of-town guests got a real taste of West Virginia. They received welcome bags that included Berkeley Springs water, DeFleuri's chocolates and Mountaineer popcorn, before the couple left for their honeymoon in Key West, Florida.

SPRING/SUMMER 2018 An EDITOR'S Pick SEE PAGE 53

BRIDE'S GOWN
J & B Bridals and Tuxedos, Chambersburg, PA
HAIR
Kelci Putman, Martinsburg
MAKEUP
Amber Brown, Mary Kay, Winchester, VA
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
David's Bridal, Hagerstown, MD
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Dana's Tuxedo, Martinsburg
WEDDING PLANNER
Aimee Myers Peters, Inwood
FLOWERS
Roostervane Florist, Funkstown, MD
Garden By The Woods, Martinsburg
CATERER
Catering by Margarita, Charles Town
CAKE
Bijou's Sweet Treats, Luray, VA
ENTERTAINMENT
Tom Noble, Nashville, TN
INVITATIONS
Leah Putterman, Invitations from the Heart, Hagerstown, MD
CEREMONY
Christ Reformed Church, Shepherdstown
RECEPTION
The Barn at York Hill, Shenandoah Junction

ANNETTE LEE GAVIN & KARL EVAN BATES

SHEPHERDSTOWN | 6.3.2017

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Liz Coulter Stead

ANNETTE AND KARL WERE FINALLY MARRIED on June 3, 2017, seven years to the day after these former high school sweethearts reunited in 2010. They wanted their wedding to be a special day focusing on their friends and family. The celebration started the night before the wedding, with a casual party hosted by Eric and Joy Lewis in their beautiful barn venue on historic McMurran Farm. The evening was an intimate way for both families and the closest friends from both sides to meet and bond in a small group before the larger wedding on Saturday. The couple's outdoor wedding took place on a perfect, warm spring afternoon at the beautiful Bavarian Inn in Shepherdstown. The bride wore a simple full-length pale blue gown and the groom dressed in a navy suit with coordinating tie. To honor earlier generations of women who were not present that day, each of Annette's sisters and nieces chose a handkerchief that had belonged to Annette's mother, grandmother, and two great aunts to hold during the ceremony. Decorations were created by friends Joy Lewis and Kerry Asam. Floral centerpieces were arranged in Blenko glass water bottles of every color. The wedding cake was Annette's grandmother Nanny's Lemon Pound Cake recipe. And the rehearsal pies were baked by June, Annette's stepmother. Dan Oehler played jazz classics on guitar. The ceremony itself was short and sweet, but the reception went into the wee hours of the night around the outdoor fire pit at the Bavarian Inn, sharing tales and laughter. Immediately after the wedding, the couple took short trip to the North Fork of Long Island, but the real honeymoon was a long-dreamed-of trip to Italy in April 2018. Annette and Karl reside in Shepherdstown.

HAIR & MAKEUP
Nikki Stonebarger, Nikki Visions, Martinsburg
FLOWERS
Joy Lewis and Kerry Asam
CATERER
Bavarian Inn, Shepherdstown
ENTERTAINMENT
Dan Oehler
LOCATION
Bavarian Inn, Shepherdstown

KAYLA DENISE HUDGINS & ROBERT HALL

LOGAN | 6.10.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Denise & Anthony Hudgins

GROOM'S PARENTS
Jackie & Bobby Hall

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Brittany Ferrell Photography

KAYLA, OF GILBERT, AND ROBERT, OF MAN, met while preparing for an Easter celebration at church in 2004. Despite an age difference, life's ups and downs, and their careers, Kayla and Robert remained friends for many years and began dating when Kayla was in college. During a hike with their dog, LuLu, at Chief Logan State Park, Kayla turned around to see LuLu wearing a sign that read, "Will you marry Robert?" The couple were married at Special Occasions in Logan. The bride wore a lace gown designed by Sherri Hill with pearls at the neckline and back, and the groom and groomsmen looked dapper in tan suits with vests and ties. The bridesmaids dressed in lace gowns of varying lengths. The bride was escorted by her father, while her uncle sang "Butterfly Kisses," and then Kayla's father surprised her with a song after giving her away. Kayla wrote the couple's vows. A reception followed the ceremony, where guests were served a four-tiered wedding cake and various flavors of cupcakes. Each table was decorated with an arrangement of lilies, roses, hydrangeas, and greenery. In lieu of a traditional first dance, the bride and groom performed a choreographed dance with their favorite songs. The couple enjoyed their honeymoon cruise to Mexico before returning to Logan, where Kayla works as a teacher and Robert is employed by ABB.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Rose Tree Boutique, Ceredo
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
David's Bridal, Charleston
GROOM'S AND GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Clarices Floral & Bridal, Gilbert
WEDDING PLANNER
Angie Rice, Logan
WEDDING COORDINATOR
Lori Stacy, Gilbert
CATERER
Special Occasions, Logan
CAKE
Walmart, Logan
ENTERTAINMENT
BRAVO-Live DJ & Lighting Extravaganza, Hurricane
VIDEOGRAPHER
Colin Merritt Wedding Films
LOCATION
Special Occasions, Logan

SAMANTHA J LOPEZ & DAVID J DIERINGER

SNOWSHOE | 7.22.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Sheila & Reza Mardmomen

GROOM'S PARENTS
SueAnn & James Goots

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Rebecca Devono Photography

WHEN SAMANTHA AND DAVID OF BRIDGEPORT got engaged, they chose to have a destination wedding at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. They opted for a traditional ceremony officiated by Father Casey Mahone and held at St. Bernard Chapel. After their nine bridesmaids and nine groomsmen congregated at the front of the church, Samantha was escorted down the aisle by her father, where she and David exchanged traditional vows. She wore a form-fitted, textured Allure gown that featured beading, lace, and sheer tulle. The bridesmaids wore blush strapless Allure gowns with contrasting striped edging. After the ceremony, a reception was held at Soaring Eagle Lodge. Dinner was served on the terrace in a tent outside the lodge with breathtaking views of the mountains. Beautifully decorated tables included gold chargers, black lanterns, gold votives, and garlands of eucalyptus leaves. After the couple's first dance to "Yours" by Russell Dickerson, guests took the party inside to the dance floor in the Hearth Room, where Davids' friends who used to DJ in high school came out of retirement for their wedding. In addition to their wedding cake, guests enjoyed cupcakes and Italian-style cookies made by Davids' grandmother, which were given to guests as favors.

BRIDE'S GOWN
House of Fashions, Bridgeport
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
House of Fashions, Bridgeport
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
House of Fashions, Bridgeport
FLOWERS
JoJo's Florist, Elkins
CAKE
My Little Cupcake, Clarksburg
CATERER
Soaring Eagle Lodge, Snowshoe
CEREMONY
St. Bernard Chapel, Snowshoe
RECEPTION
Soaring Eagle Lodge, Snowshoe

COURTNEY LUANN LUSK & WILLIAM JOSEPH COOK

CHARLESTON | 7.15.17

WEB EXCLUSIVE • JUNE

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Lisa & Danny Lusk

GROOM'S PARENTS
Cathy & Gordon Cook

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Jenny Reese Photography

WIL, OF SOUTH CHARLESTON, AND COURTNEY, OF CROSS LANES, met in 2011 through mutual friends while in college at West Virginia University. Nearly five years later, Wil planned a unique proposal—although it didn't go as planned. They were going out to a birthday dinner for Courtney, who is a Type 1 diabetic, and Wil had hidden the engagement ring in her test strip container. He had intended to propose during dinner, but she checked her blood sugar earlier than planned and she found the ring before they made it out of the driveway. The couple married at the State Capitol. The bride chose a strapless, form-fitting lace gown with a beaded sash and fingertip-length veil, and the bridesmaids wore different styles of blush floor-length gowns with gold shoes. The groom and groomsmen donned gray suits with blush paisley ties. The bride was escorted down the aisle by her father to The Piano Guys' "Can't Help Falling In Love." The couple exchanged traditional vows, but also answered questions like "Why did they love each other?" and "What was their favorite memory?" The reception was held at the University of Charleston, where the bride and groom danced their first dance to "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran. Guests enjoyed a lovely dinner followed by Spring Hill Bakery's hot dog donuts for dessert before dancing the night away. The couple exited under a canopy of sparklers, and a donation to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation was given in lieu of favors. The couple reside in Morgantown, where Wil is a CPA and Courtney is a pre-K special needs teacher.

BRIDE'S GOWN
The Boutique by B.Belle Events, Charleston
BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES
Weddingtonway.com
GROOM'S & GROOMSMEN'S ATTIRE
Men's Warehouse, Charleston
WEDDING PLANNER
Simply Gorgeous Events by Lara-Jill
FLOWERS
Simply Gorgeous Events by Lara-Jill
CATERER
University of Charleston, Charleston
DESSERT
Spring Hill Bakery, South Charleston
ENTERTAINMENT
BRAVO-Live DJ and Lighting Extravaganza, Hurricane
INVITATIONS
MESH Design and Development
CEREMONY
West Virginia State Capitol, Charleston
RECEPTION
University of Charleston, Charleston

KIMBERLY MARIE TROAST & THOMAS LEE LICCIARDI

NASSAU, BAHAMAS | 5.5.17

BRIDE'S PARENTS
Judy & Richard Troast

GROOM'S PARENTS
Jenny & Thomas Licciardi

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Ryan Williams

KIM AND TOM'S SPECIAL DAY STARTED LIKE NO OTHER. They decided on a destination wedding with just the two of them in the Bahamas, and since Bahamian law states that a couple must be in the Bahamas for three days prior to their nuptials they started their wedding festivities by taking their honeymoon first. As avid scuba divers and adventurers, they decided to sail and scuba dive the Great Exumas for the week leading up to their big day. On their wedding day, which fell on Cinco De Mayo, they disembarked their catamaran and headed to The Cove at Atlantis to get ready. Later that evening they arrived at sunset to Jaws Beach, a deserted beach in Nassau, to pledge their vows to one another. Their favorite part of the ceremony was walking toward one another on that sandy beach as the waves lapped at their feet and the salty breeze blew them toward one another. The moment was magical as they read their own vows to one another, laughing and crying, and then danced in the sand as the sun set behind them. They ended the evening at the One and Only Resort with dinner on the ocean and dancing to Lionel Richie's "Truly." The couple and their newborn son, Tommy, reside in Morgantown, where Tom is the owner of Jacqueline's Fine Jewelry and Kim is the vice president and business services officer at BB&T.

BRIDE'S GOWN
Custom
GROOM'S ATTIRE
Daniel's of Morgantown, Morgantown
FLOWERS
The Nassau Florist
CATERER
The One and Only Resort, Nassau, Bahamas
ENTERTAINMENT
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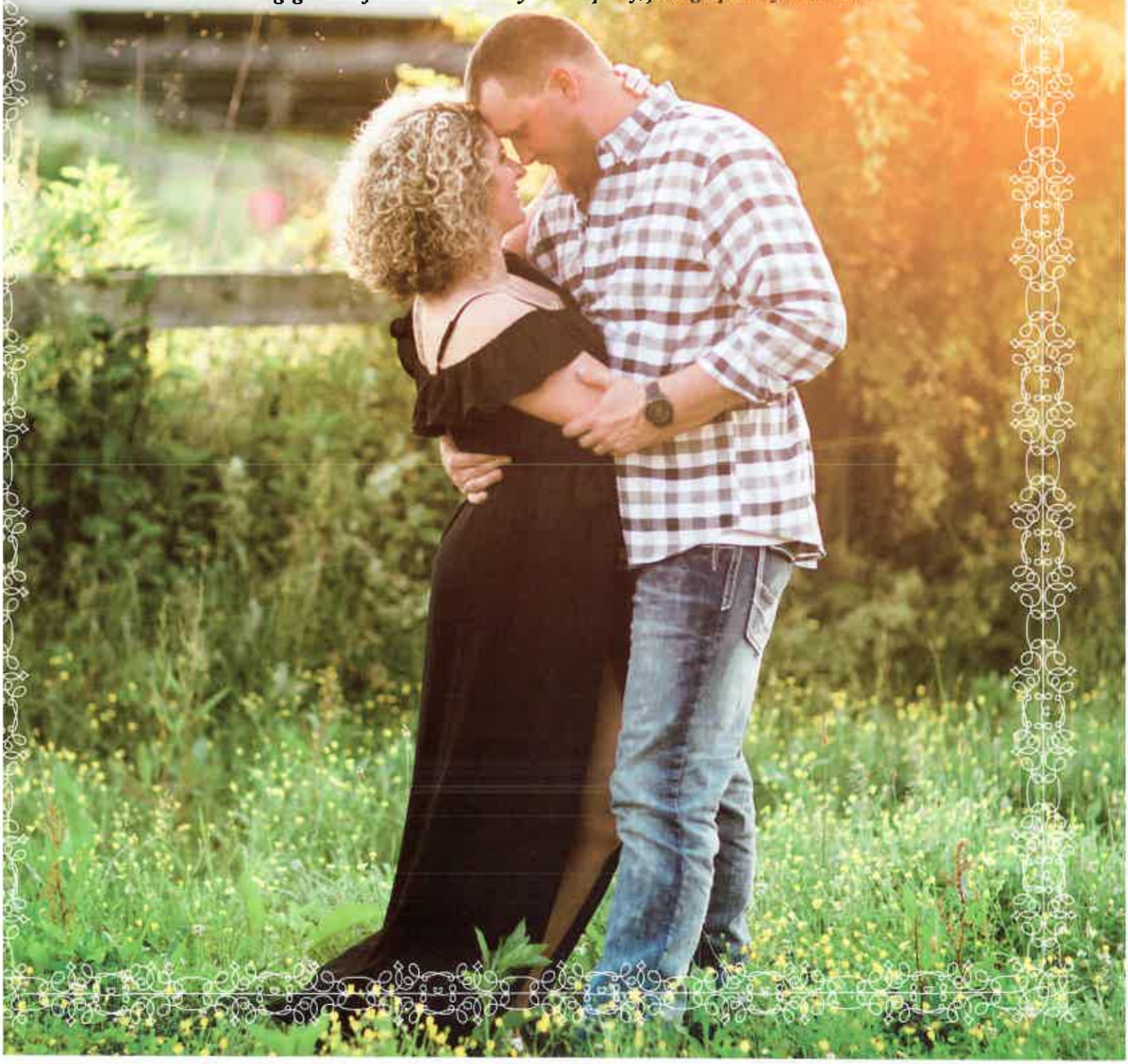
The Spring/Summer 2018

ENGAGEMENTS

To have and to hold ...

Find out who got a proposal and who said yes in the pages of our Engagement Announcements.

From the engagement of Caitlin Stout & Tyler Pumphrey, photographed by Kuirsta + Seth



KRISTIN MARIE BRAND & BLADE SAVAGE SECRIST

THE BRIDE IS FROM MORGANTOWN; THE GROOM IS FROM WINONA.

ENGAGEMENT DATE: 9.14.17
WEDDING DATE: 8.25.18

Kristin and Blade met on the first day of fall semester at West Virginia University in August 2013. Their eyes met as they waited outside of the lecture hall for Geology 103 to start. Kristin made sure to sit close, but far enough away. By the end of class, though, Blade had introduced himself to Kristin, and the rest is history. On a trip to South Carolina, Blade planned to go skydiving with some friends. Kristin on the other hand was going to be the best spectator ever. After Blade jumped, she was waiting for him to land. When his feet touched the ground he unzipped his jumpsuit to show her his t-shirt that read, "Will you marry me?" Kristin was taken completely by surprise. It was the best day of her life. Kristin works in human resources, and Blade is a police officer.

WHERE THEY RESIDE
Morgantown

PHOTOGRAPHER
Photo by Tyson

PHOTO LOCATION
Morgantown

SARAH ELIZABETH HUTSON & BRANDON NICHOLAS SHARP

THE BRIDE IS FROM MORGANTOWN; THE GROOM IS FROM ST. ALBANS.

ENGAGEMENT DATE: 9.16.17
WEDDING DATE: 5.18.19

Their love story began as many modern fairytales do: online (OKcupid to be exact). Sarah was drawn to Brandon's username, "Beerasaurus1986," as she too has a fondness for libations and prehistoric wildlife. Brandon's interest was initially piqued by Sarah's long auburn hair. However, a quick glance at her profile revealed someone equally devoted to the Mountain State, with many overlapping interests. On a romantic weekend getaway, Brandon took Sarah for a picnic at Dolly Sods. He got down on one knee and presented her with her late mother's ring. In Sarah's excitement, compounded by years of waiting for this exact moment, she forced the two-sizes-too-small jewelry over her knuckle. Their perfect weekend ended with a trip to a department store so they could cut the ring off Sarah's quickly swelling finger. They are sincerely grateful to Jane V. Jewelers in Morgantown for repairing and resizing the ring. Sarah is the general manager of Happy Crafters, and Brandon is a post production specialist for Action Title Research.

WHERE THEY RESIDE
Morgantown

PHOTOGRAPHER
Chelsea Hellen Photography

PHOTO LOCATION
Lindy Point in Tucker County

ITLIN MARIE STOUT & ER WAYNE PUMPHREY

RIDE IS FROM SHINNSTON; GROOM IS FROM CLARKSBURG.

EMENT DATE: 1.28.17
NG DATE: 5.12.18

gagement started on Christmas Eve with the walk and talk ery father hopes he will get, but never wants to. Tyler, wanting his life with Caitlin, an employee of WVU Medicine, in a onal manner explained to her father how much he loved Caitlin, promised to always honor, respect, and provide for her. After ng the family blessing, Tyler started on his quest to make the ment one that Caitlin would never forget. Tyler, a welder with n Welding Company by trade, spends a lot of time on the road, rlier in the couple's relationship they discovered Lewisburg. considered this "their" place, so it was only fitting that Tyler's as to get Caitlin back to Lewisburg to ask her to marry him. Caitlin believed was a family outing, was actually a well-ht-out proposal. While visiting their favorite location, Tyler, nded knee, exposed his heart and professed his love while for her hand in marriage.

THEY RESIDE
port

GRAPHER
+ Seth

LOCATION
a, Bridgeport

JENNIFER MICHELLE WOLFE & JACK RICHARD GREENE

THE COUPLE IS FROM RAVENSWOOD.

ENGAGEMENT DATE: 9.2.17
WEDDING DATE: 8.18.18

Jennifer and Jack have known each other for more than 15 years. Jennifer was friends with his brother during school, but life eventually took them in different directions. After she had her eye on Jack for a while, they finally started dating in May 2016. After dating for almost a year and a half, in September 2017, Jack took Jennifer to her favorite restaurant, Spagna's in Marietta, Ohio. She was so surprised when the waitress brought two champagne glasses with a glitter bow in the shape of a heart tied around the glasses, that she didn't even see the ring sitting on top of the bow. She truly didn't know what was going on at first until Jack got down on one knee in front of the entire restaurant and asked her to be his wife. Jennifer is an attorney and Jack is a union pipefitter and certified welding inspector.

WHERE THEY RESIDE
Ravenswood

PHOTOGRAPHER
Michele Coleman Photography, Murrells Inlet, South Carolina

PHOTO LOCATION
Caledonia Fish and Golf Club, Pawleys Island, South Carolina

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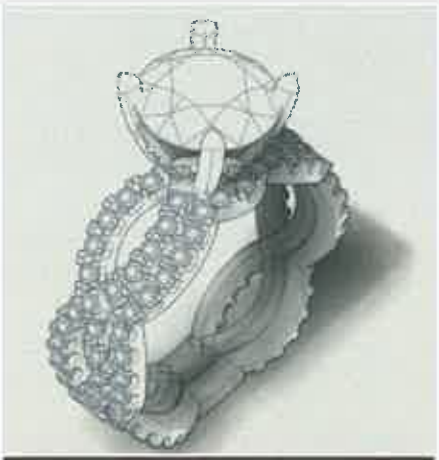

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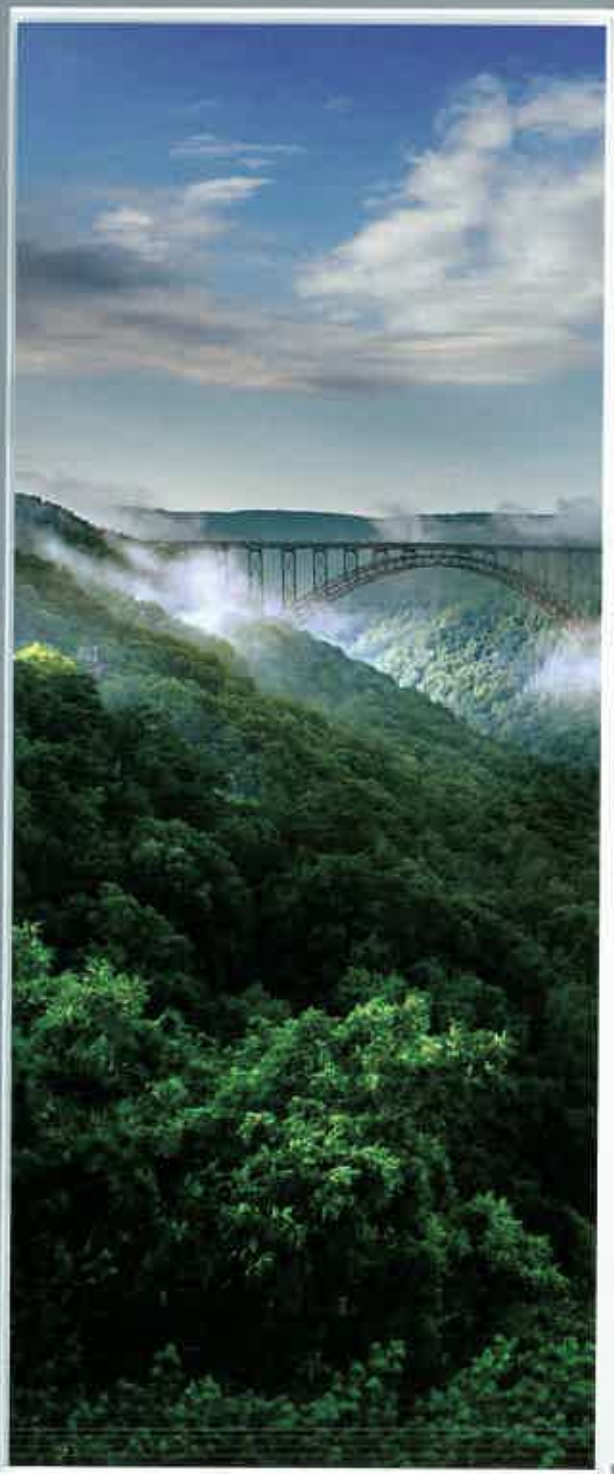

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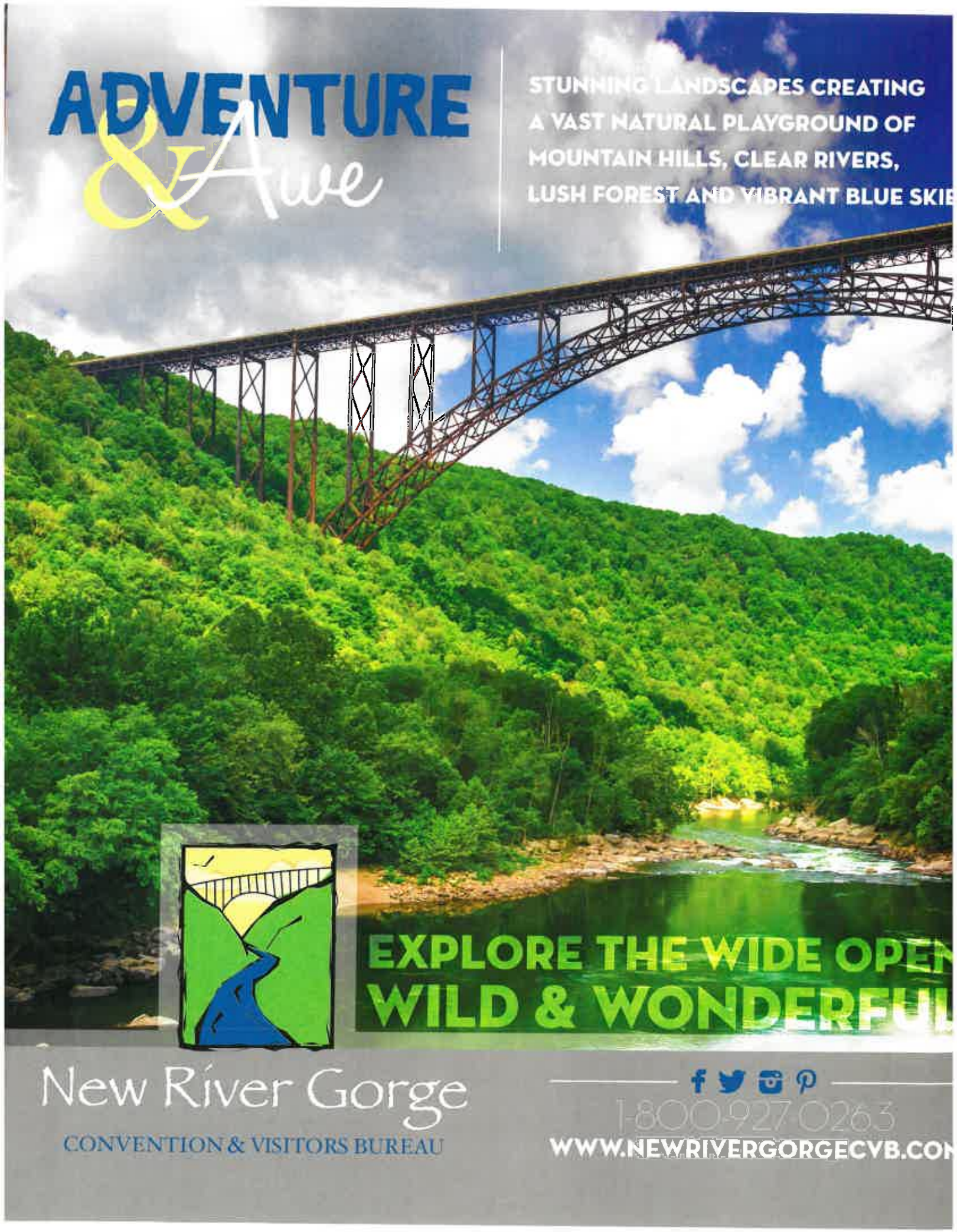
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ON BEHALF OF OUR MANY friends, partners, and fellow outdoor enthusiasts, Adventures on the Gorge is pleased to introduce you to one of our nation's greatest outdoor playgrounds, the New River Gorge! The New River Gorge is more than 1,000 feet deep in places, and the river system is one of the oldest on Earth. The geology is stunning, the biodiversity surprising, and the history fascinating. From the old waters of the New River, the flora and fauna abound in this densely forested Appalachian haven.

Since 1968 modern adventurers have been taking white water rafters down this magnificent gorge. Four outfitting companies (Mountain River Tours, Class VI, Rivermen, and Songer) joined together in 2008 to become Adventures on the Gorge (AOTG), the only adventure resort of its kind in the U.S.

You'll find countless attractions and activities to enjoy in the New River Gorge area. See the work of skilled artisans at Tamarack. Chat with Maura and Gene about their adventure gear at Fayetteville's Water Stone Outdoors, or step into a harness and ease across the catwalk that sits inches below the New River Gorge Bridge and 851 feet above the rapids. There is so much to take in as you gaze from that lofty perch above the New River Gorge National River. It is one of three national park units in the region, which together comprise the largest stretch of protected rivers in the eastern U.S. Nearby, the others are the Bluestone National Scenic River and the world famous Gauley National Recreation Area.

What else can you do? How about learn to do something you always wanted to do, but never got the chance? Let Sean teach you to fish for bass or muskie. Doug, Hannah, or the "Gauley Lama" might guide you on your first river run. Want to try zipping? Ask Bongo or E Ray to take you out on TreeTops Canopy Tour, a zip line adventure regarded as one of the top 10 in the country. If you dare, try the high-flying Adrena-line at Gravity, among the highest, fastest zips in the nation. Last time I checked, BLR's record was 73 mph. See if you can beat him.

One of our guests asked me last summer, "Hart, what is it that you do?" On behalf of our team, I said, "Well, we get to wind people up like tops and then send them home the most excited and energized they will be all year. That's what we do, and we do it every day." During Gauley season I was walking across our resort when I heard someone yelling my name. As I turned around, a young guy asked, "Do you remember me?" I said, "You bet. You're Chad, and we paddled the Gauley together last year." That is a bond of friendship we will forever share. He came with six people the first time and returned with 20 the next. That says something.

Our company's vision is "Leading the World Outdoors." We want to lead you outside to enjoy nature in a way that will enrich, enliven, and invigorate you. Come stay with us, or heck, stay with one of our friends. Just get here.

John Muir once wrote, "We little know what wildness exists in each of us." Think about its meaning, then stop dreaming about what "wildness" might lurk inside of you. Try something new. Make it a reality. Join us for a great adventure. We might become your lifelong friends, like Randy, Dan, Alisa, Mike, Piotr, Anietra, or Chad and thousands of others. To our friend, Brian (page 50), we miss you, buddy.

Sincerely,

DAVE "HART" HARTVIGSEN
President & CEO

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West Virginia is called "Almost Heaven" for good reason. Located within 500 miles of more than half of the U.S. population, it is surprisingly easy to travel to the Mountain State, yet once you cross into our borders, you'll feel worlds away. West Virginia is a place where dichotomies meet. It is the northernmost southern state and the southernmost northern state. It's a place where life slows down, where laid-back escapes are at every bend in the road. It is also an adrenaline junkie's dream destination, where heart-pumping outdoor recreation abounds.

Adventures on the Gorge embodies all of the different components that make West Virginia special. It is a place that brings families together to bond with one another and nature. It is where authentic memories are made. It's where couples head to celebrate their love, and where friends reconnect and new friendships are made. It is a place that stays with you long after you've left.

Experience the thrill of navigating one of the world's oldest rivers. Zip through forests of towering trees. Learn to climb the rugged face of a towering rock. Walk across the iconic New River Gorge Bridge with unparalleled views of the river 850 feet below. We invite you to climb our mountains, ride our white water, kayak our rivers, and bike our scenic trails. Enjoy fresh local food and our unrivaled artisan craftsmanship, and then bring our heritage to your home with products that impart a sense of place. Tour our charming towns where hospitality will welcome you at every turn. Or quite simply slow down and soak up solitude at the grandest outdoor pool in the state, Canyon Falls Swimming Hole. Once you visit, you'll understand why it is a place where people return—or never leave.

This magazine will introduce you to the area, the abundance of recreational opportunities, easy day trips, and special hidden gems. As you will see, at Adventures on the Gorge there's something for everyone. Come explore with us!

Nikki

NIKKI BOWMAN
Publisher and Editor
New South Media, Inc.

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Contributors

Fred Wolfe is a semi-retired CPA and spends many days each year hiking and photographing the New River Gorge and surrounding areas. He has been visiting the gorge regularly for more than nine years and has accumulated more than one year there exploring and photographing the rich bounty of the gorge, including its waterfalls, overlooks, and ghost towns. *fredwolfe.zenfolio.com*

Chris Jackson is a full-time photographer based in Fayetteville, West Virginia. With a solid background in photojournalism and cycling sports but able to work in all fields, he captures genuine and timeless images that blend fine art visuals with keen storytelling. He enjoys riding bikes and exploring with his wife and daughter. *chrisjacksonmedia.com*

Photographer **Elizabeth Roth** grew up fishing, writing, biking, drawing, swimming, and making music in the beautiful Greenbrier Valley. She completed her visual arts degree at West Virginia University in May 2013 and has been living in Morgantown ever since, where she recently added cross-country skiing and sewing to her ever-growing list of hobbies.

Danielle Conaway is from Fairmont and works in health care marketing and communications. She has written for *Morgantown* magazine since its first issue and also contributes to *WV Living*'s music blog. She enjoys yoga, cooking, playing drums, seeing live music, and hanging with her cat, Buddy Zoom.

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Grammin' on the Gorge

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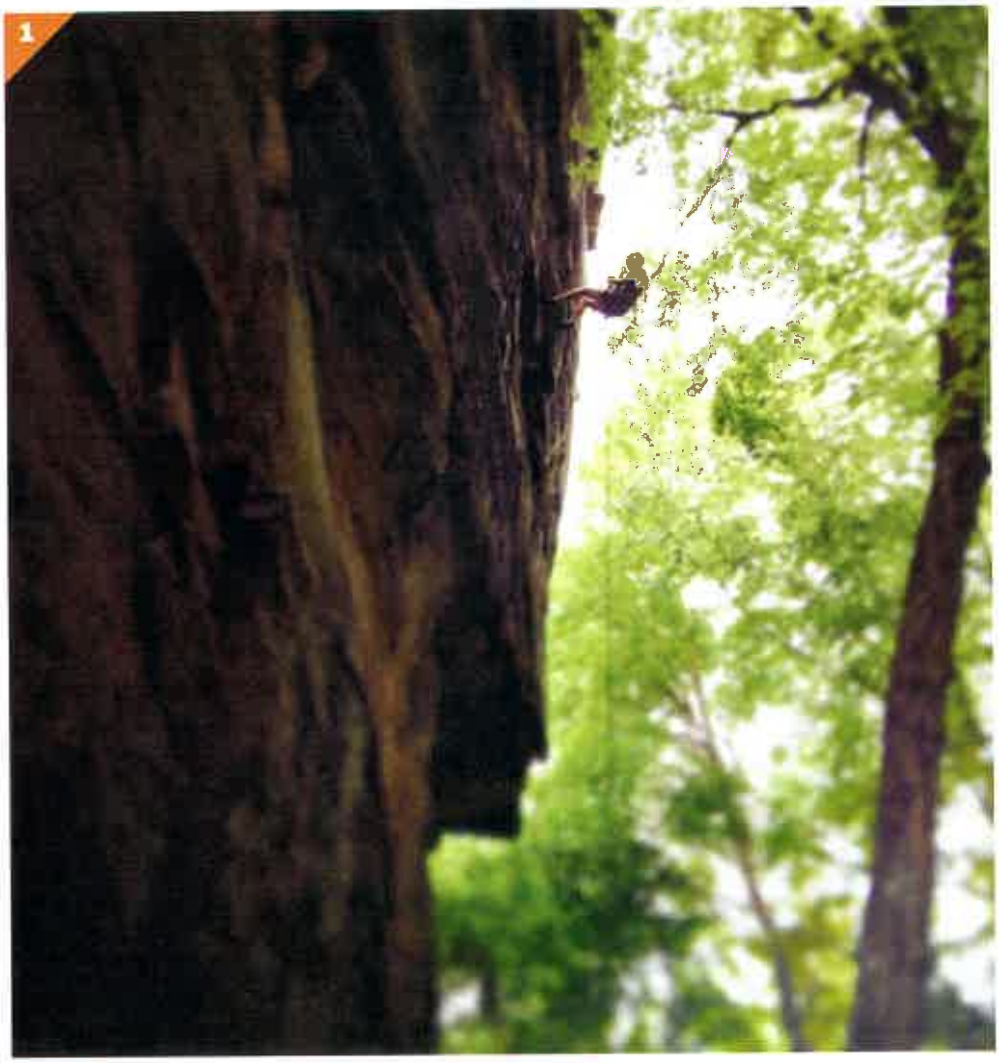
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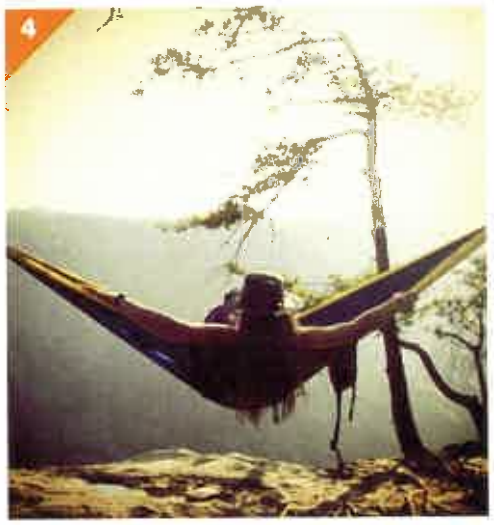
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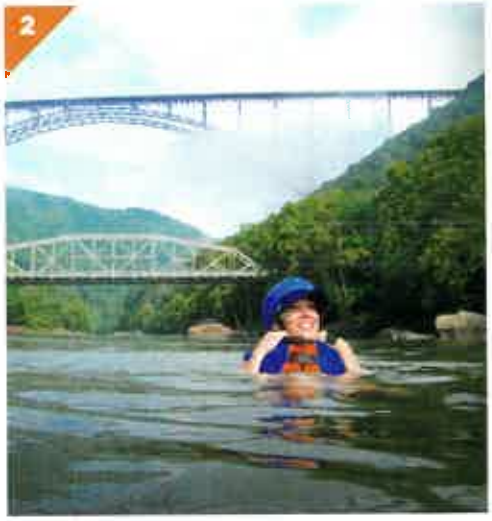
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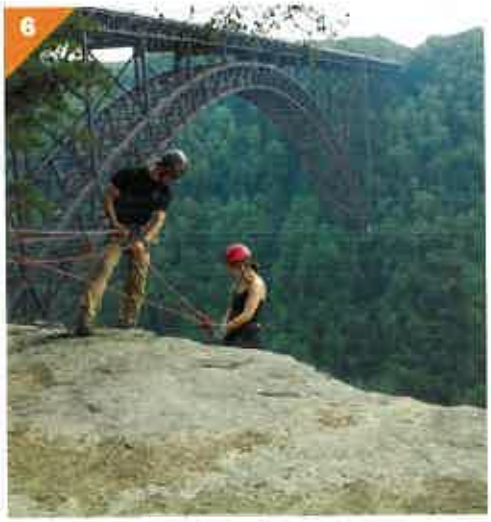
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1 Audrina Lanier rappels down the Endless Wall.
2 Naomi Petrinovic relaxes between rapids on the Lower New River.
3 Grover Tadlock soars high above the trees on Gravity Zip Lines.
4 Angela Leonardi hangs out in a hammock on the edge of the New River Gorge.
5 Linsey McCollam takes in the scenery with a smile on Gravity Zip Lines.
6 Brianna Hill rappels down Bridge Buttress.
7 Morgan Napolillo and friend hike Long Point Trail, just outside of Fayetteville.
8 Grover Tadlock takes a moment to float.
9 Ariel Treadway tests her harness on Gravity Zip Lines.

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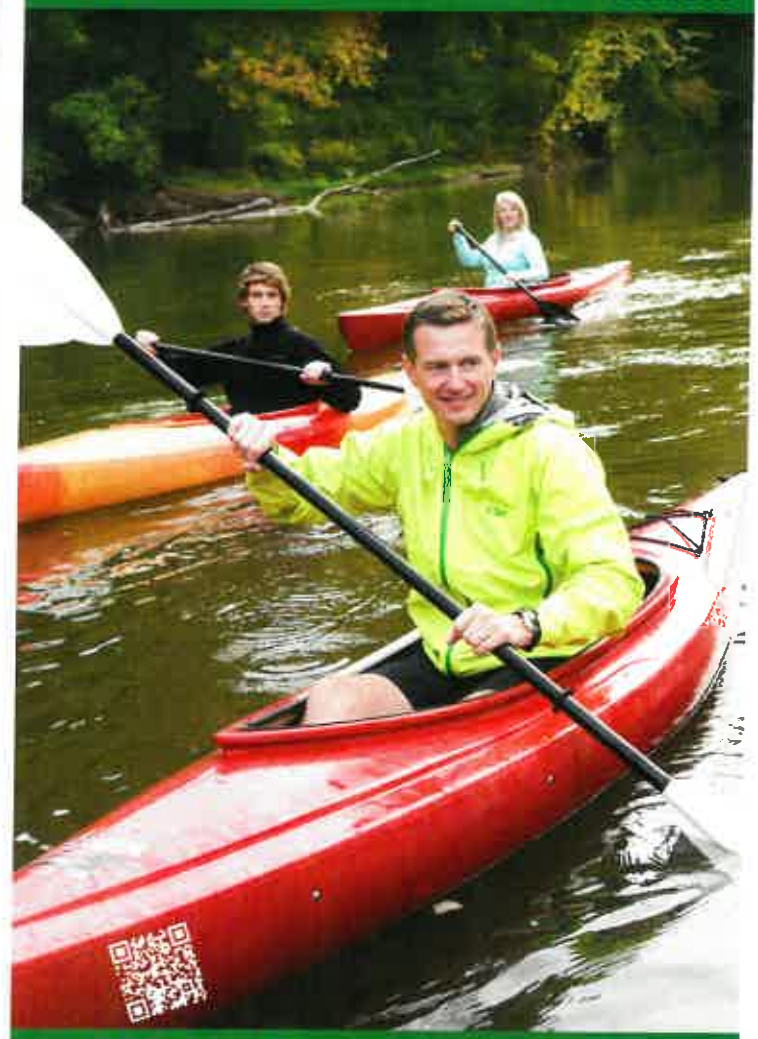

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5 Things You Won't See Anywhere Else

Even the locals might be surprised.

compiled by JORDAN CARTER

1 From 1987 to 1991 more than 30 **PEREGRINE FALCONS** were released at the Endless Wall within the New River Gorge. Another release program was conducted from 2001 to 2006 when 122 falcons were released from the Endless Wall and Grandview areas of the park. For several years falcons have been successfully nesting under the New River Gorge Bridge.

5 **WILD BLUE ADVENTURES** offers biplane rides in fully restored and museum-quality World War II airplanes. Straight-and-level sightseeing tours of the New River Gorge are offered as well as aerobatic thrill rides complete with barrel rolls and S-turns.

2 Abandoned mine portals tracing back to West Virginia's long and continued history of coal mining are now home to **SEVEN SPECIES OF BATS.** Furry friends like the little brown bat, the eastern small-footed bat, and the Virginia big-eared bat hibernate in these mines.

4 The New River Gorge is **HOME TO MORE THAN 1,400 SPECIES OF PLANTS.** It has the most diverse flora of any river gorge in southern or central Appalachia. More species of plants thrive here than at Yellowstone National Park.

3 **THE NEW RIVER** is one of the oldest rivers in the world.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: BEKAH CALL; LARISA BISHOP-BOROS/WIKI COMMONS; ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE; NIKKI BOWMAN, NIKKI BOWMAN

Know Before You Go

Memorize these safety tips before you explore.

WHETHER YOU'RE GOING OUT TO LONG POINT or sleeping under the stars, make sure you're prepared with these must-know tips to stay safe and comfortable during your adventure, all while preserving your surroundings.

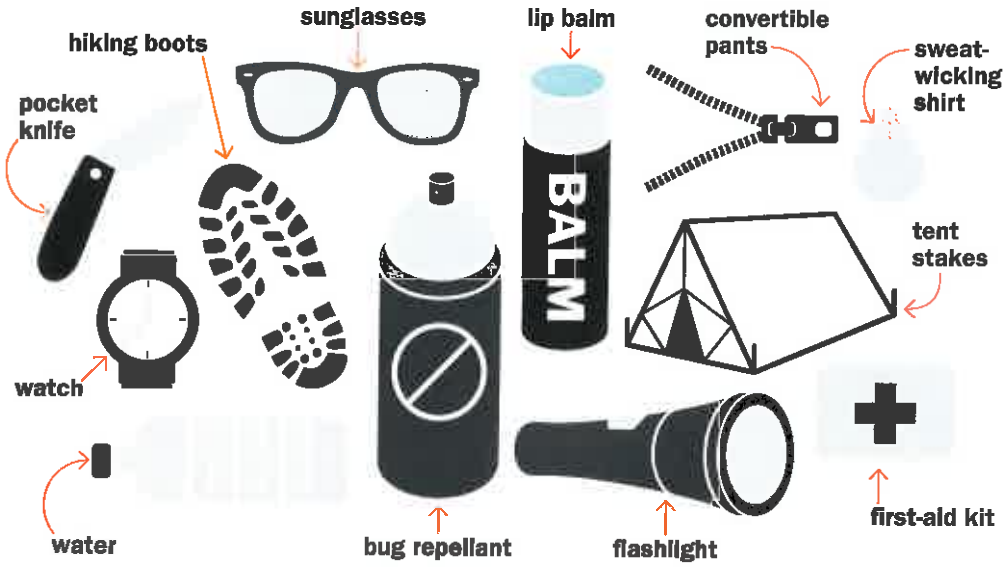
HIKING

- **Avoid hiking alone.** Use the "buddy system" and, if traveling with a group, never stray.
- **Pick a well-traveled and well-marked trail.** Pay attention to your surroundings. This includes landmarks.
- **Tell someone where you are going** and when you should return.
- **Layer for the weather and the season.** Wear bright colors. Carry quality rain gear.
- **Avoid wearing dangling jewelry.**
- **Carry a whistle.** Three short blasts indicate a call of distress.
- **Carry plenty of drinking water.** Never assume stream water is safe to drink.
- **If you are carrying a backpack,** pack it with the heaviest things in the middle, closest to your back. Put the lighter things at the top and bottom.
- **Bring something to collect any garbage** you may generate. Do not litter.
- **"Leave No Trace."**
- **Keep an AOTG contact number (855.255.1230) handy** in case of emergency.

CAMPING

- **Bring a pair of socks** for every day you are camping, plus two extra pairs.
- **Put *everything*** into waterproof bags.
- **Bring a pair of lightweight** creek-crossing shoes.
- **At night, have anything scented (including your food) packed away** so animals can't get to it. Be sure to stow your garbage, as well. Garbage attracts raccoons, bears, etc.
- **Don't wear any perfume** or deodorant with a scent—it will attract bugs.
- **Don't bring a pillow.** Instead, stuff one of your smaller waterproof bags with your clothes and use that as a pillow.
- **Bring plenty of water** to stay hydrated.

WHAT TO PACK ON YOUR BACK



Good One!

One raft guide has more than a few funny jokes up his life jacket.

DOUG LUDWIG LIKES TO LAUGH. The white water rafting guide wants guests at Adventures on the Gorge to laugh, too, and he's good at getting them to crack smiles. Before each trip down the river, he likes to tell a few silly one-liners to loosen up the crowd. "You have to remind people that they're here to have a good time," he says. "The idea is to laugh today."

What do you call a raft guide without a girlfriend?
Homeless

Where do you hide $20 from a raft guide?
In a bar of soap.

What's the difference between a raft guide and a large pizza?
A large pizza can feed a family.

A Taste of Wild and Wonderful

A lot of specialty foods are made right here in West Virginia—from creamy chocolates to artisanal salt to aromatic ramp creations. Here are just a few you can find in or around Fayetteville.

Spiced

West Virginia Ramp Biscuit Mix by Brown's Creations in Clay If you visit West Virginia, you have to try ramps, the state's own wild-growing garlic-like herb. Brown's mix includes wild-harvested, hand-dried ramps and real raw sugar and is best prepared with ramp vinegar and/or garlic-infused oil. The mix also makes a great pizza crust. Prepare enough batter to spread in a greased nine-inch iron cast-iron skillet, add your favorite pizza toppings, and bake for about 20 minutes. *$6.99 for a 12-ounce bag. WV Marketplace, Capitol Market, 800 Smith Street, Charleston, 304.720.2244*

Savory

Pepperoni Rolls by Wild Flour Bakery If you want a taste of West Virginia's official state food in Fayetteville, look no further than Wild Flour Bakery. Grab a roll in one of two flavors—white pepperoni rolls, with sliced pepperoni and cheese, or pizza pepperoni rolls, with pepperoni, cheese, and fresh sauce. $3 each or $1.50 for a half-size. *Wild Flour Bakery, 105 West Maple Avenue, Fayetteville, 304.574.0001*

Smoky

Sweet Onion Peach Salsa from Blue Smoke Salsa A trip to the gorge must include a stop at the Blue Smoke Salsa shop in Ansted, just 15 miles from Fayetteville, where you'll find all natural kettle-cooked salsas, savory jellies, and tangy sauces in unique flavors. The Sweet Onion Peach salsa is a spicy, smoky delight, infused with a touch of fresh peaches. $5.95 for a 12-ounce jar. *Blue Smoke Salsa, 119 East Main Street, Ansted, 304.658.3800*

Sweet

Milk Chocolate Almond Bark from Holl's Swiss Chocolatier This West Virginia-born chocolatier draws inspiration from Swiss tradition, making hand-crafted chocolates in small batches from fresh, high-quality ingredients. Try the Milk Chocolate Almond Bark, made with real Swiss chocolate and toasted vanilla-sugar almonds. $10 for an 8-ounce bag. *Holl's Swiss Chocolatier, Capitol Market, 800 Smith Street, Charleston, 800.842.4512*

Salty

Artisanal Salt from J.Q. Dickinson Salt-Works Harvested from an ancient brine aquifer, J.Q. Dickinson Salt-Works salt is pure white with a distinctive crunch. It pairs well with almost anything. Try it on fresh baked bread, salted caramel, or a crisp romaine salad. $4.95 for a 1-ounce jar or $8.95 for a 3.5-ounce jar. *Eggplant, 1011 Bridge Road, Charleston, 304.346.3525*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: NIKKI BOWMAN; CARLA WITT FORD; ELIZABETH ROTH; CARLA WITT FORD; ANGELA SUNDSTROM

No Average Work Trip

Creative thinking and team building thrive at this rural retreat.

IMAGINE GOING WHITE WATER rafting with your co-workers and not knowing how to swim. That's the kind of fear some employees of Ascend Performance Materials overcome during their annual retreat at Adventures on the Gorge.

"We've had people out on the river who didn't know how to swim, but their fellow co-workers got them through their anxiety. They feel really proud of themselves, especially if they are hesitant or nervous about going white water rafting. It proves to them that they can overcome fear and working as a team is the way to go," says Monica Jackson, Ascend Performance Materials communications and external relations specialist.

The exhilarating experiences of rushing rapids and zip-lining through the trees are some of the thrilling activities that keep Ascend coming back to Adventures on the Gorge and West Virginia for its three-day retreat year after year. "Zip-lining allows our team members to address their fears and trust that the safety systems will protect them," says Ascend Performance Materials Projects Lead Chris Johnson. "We also learn how to trust each other more through the white water rafting because you have to work together to accomplish the goal of not flipping your raft." Adventures on the Gorge also provides a video of the rafting trip—a great way for the group to relive the adrenaline-filled experience.

Since 2009 the chemicals and plastics company in Houston, Texas, has held its recognition event at Adventures on the Gorge to celebrate outstanding team and individual contributions. "It is so much more than a typical hotel retreat. The guests love being in a working environment surrounded by nature," says Adventures on the Gorge Catering Manager Jessica Campbell.

ABOVE This Texas group has been traveling to Adventures on the Gorge to soar through the trees as part of its retreat for years.

Chris was among the first group of Ascend employees to attend the retreat in 2009. "The scenery and surroundings are very calming. Compared to the hectic pace of my normal life, I am able to slow down and focus more intently on the brainstorming exercises. Adventures on the Gorge has great staff and facilities, incredible activities, delicious food, and it's the perfect setting to accomplish great things," he says.

When guests on a corporate retreat arrive at the adventure resort, Adventures on the Gorge staff arrange a meet-and-greet with heavy appetizers on the deck overlooking the New River Gorge, often against the backdrop of a beautiful sunset. Guests are accommodated in large, cozy, well-furnished cabins. The next day's meals and morning meetings take place at Smokey's on the Gorge, a timber frame restaurant perched on the rim of the gorge. Then guests go on an afternoon excursion with aerial adventures like zip-lining. Cocktails, appetizers, and dinner at Smokey's await them afterward. The following

day's breakfast, lunch, and morning meetings occur again at Smokey's, followed by white water rafting on the Lower New River.

The secluded setting gives guests an escape from their daily lives. "I love being away from it all and the great outdoors, back-to-nature feel about Adventures on the Gorge," Monica says. She says the serene environment encourages creativity and thinking outside the box during a corporate retreat. "It feels different being surrounded by beautiful nature instead of concrete highways or high rises. Our team members are happy to be there, feel special and cared for, so they really get into the exercises that the presenters take them through. This allows them to think freely and feel inspired," she says.

Though the retreat is largely about having fun and taking risks, productive meetings and valuable networking with employees from other Ascend sites also take place. "Even though I had been an employee with Ascend for over 10 years, this was my first interaction with people from other sites. It was invigorating to interact with bright people and realize their great ideas could be brought back with me to our Texas facility," Chris says. Ascend's

ABOVE Groups like the one from Ascend Performance Materials, out of Texas, love having their corporate retreats at Adventures on the Gorge. The groups grow as teams as they suit up for activities like zip-lining.

planning group has specific goals to meet at its retreat, but more importantly, the group wants team members to feel a sense of recognition, achievement, and value. "This event is intended to celebrate their contributions, and by holding the meeting in such a unique and beautiful venue, I believe we accomplish that," Monica says.

For most of the guests, it's their first time experiencing the breathtaking beauty of the New River Gorge. "Typically it's the first time our employees have ever been to West Virginia," Monica says. "They almost always

walk away saying how they were blown away by the location and would love to bring their families back." The spectacular views are memorable for all who attend. "The countryside is beautiful and peaceful," says Chris, who had never been to the Mountain State before the work trips in Fayette County. "I enjoy sitting in the evenings and looking out over the gorge."

Ascend's retreats vary year to year, as Jessica always has something new up her sleeve to plan. An outdoor pool and deck area allows groups to hold team-building activities, play games outside, or have dinner poolside while looking out over the New River Gorge. Jessica loves working with groups like Ascend Performance Materials. "I love their excitement. Usually the guests don't know each other since they come from all over the country," she says. "It's great to see them appreciate West Virginia and form bonds with their co-workers that will last a lifetime after the experiences they share on this retreat."

written by DANIELLE CONAWAY
photos courtesy of ASCEND PERFORMANCE MATERIALS

AERIAL ADVENTURES

Soar through the trees or walk high in the sky with one of these options at Adventures on the Gorge.

TREETOPS CANOPY TOUR
$99/person
Must be at least 10 years old
Year-round

GRAVITY ZIP LINES
$109/person
Must be at least 12 years old
April - November

TIMBERTREK AERIAL PARK
Two hours, $59/person
Must be at least 7 years old
April - November

MoonTrek
Two hours, $49/person
Must be at least 7 years old

BRIDGEWALK
$69/person
Must be at least 10 years old
Year-round

855.255.1230
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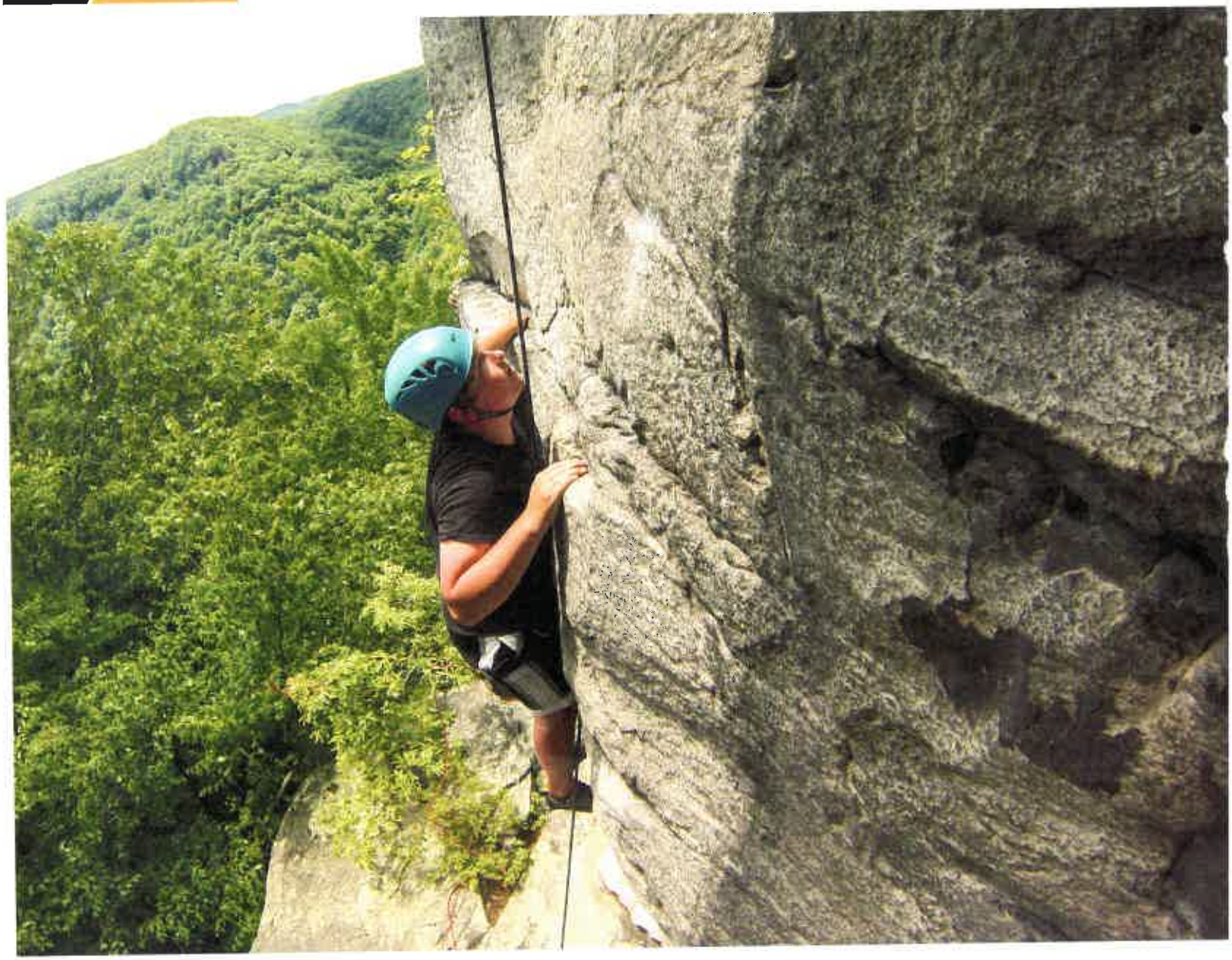


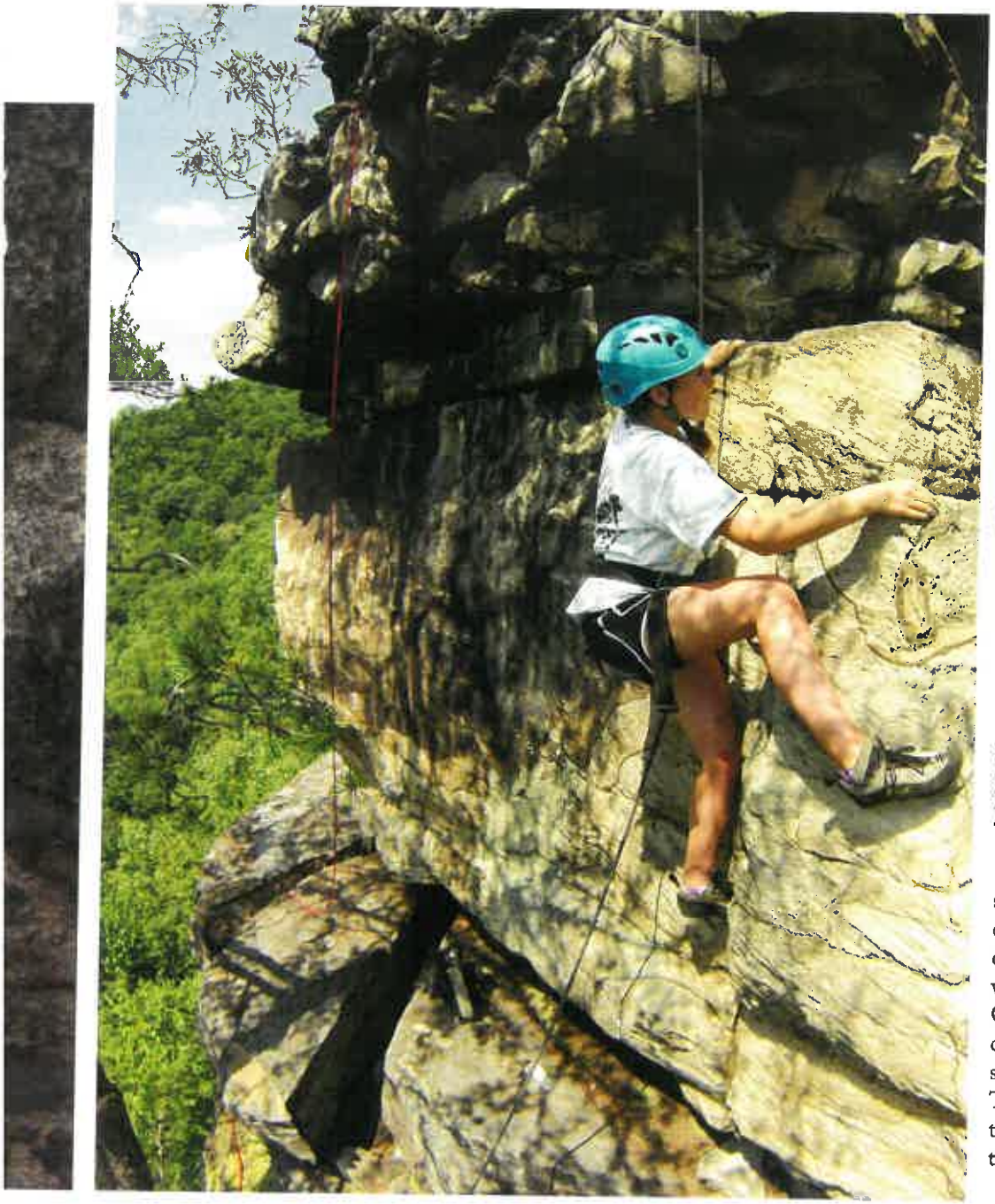
Climbing the New

West Virginia boasts world-class climbing in the New River Gorge.

IT'S ONE OF THOSE THINGS you'll have to see for yourself. Climbing the sheer vertical cliffs of the New River Gorge, hundreds of feet above ground, the trees below you are nothing but hedges. The sky above you a vast ocean. Only a rope, expertly knotted and rigged, holds you secure in limbo. "People talk about the New and say it's a good climbing destination, but you don't realize it until you get there," says Nick Rothenbush, a guide with Adventures on the Gorge. "For a lot of people out West and in other places in the country, there are so many other good places that West Virginia might not be at the top of the list. But once you go, you realize how great the climbing is."

Originally from Indiana, Nick had been rock climbing for a year before he headed to West Virginia to experience the New River Gorge and its ancient rock walls. He'd already been to storied climbing destinations like Moab, Utah, and Yosemite National Park. "I had a base to compare the New to once I went there," he says. "I'd still put the New River Gorge up there as some of the best single-pitch rock climbing I've ever seen." Single-pitch refers to routes that can be climbed with one 60- to 70-meter rope, including ascent and descent. Multi-pitch courses require more thread. "The New cliffs are around 100 feet so you're usually good with one rope," Nick says. The guide recently came home from a climbing trip in Patagonia, Chile, and plans to return to Adventures on the Gorge for a fourth season, where he'll guide hundreds of climbers and inexperienced families along what is some of the best rock this side of the Mississippi.

The New River Gorge became a popular climbing destination in the mid-1990s when



Climbers scale The Pinnacle in the New River Gorge during a visit to Adventures on the Gorge in Fayette County.

climbing went mainstream, according to Jim Taylor, a 33-year climbing veteran and the adventure resort's activities manager. "I first came to the New River in 1987 and there were very few climbers. Most of the area was undeveloped," he says. After the New River Gorge was featured in popular adventure magazines, curious climbers began to trickle in. "The New is famous for steep, hard routes on high-quality sandstone," Jim says. "It offers a vast array of routes of every level and can accommodate a large number of people without ever feeling crowded. The cliffs are located at the top of the gorge so you can expect panoramic views of the river below." On busy weekends around 500 climbers stretch their limbs on cliffs along the New River and surrounding areas these days.

"A common misconception of climbing is that it's all about how many pull-ups you can do. But it's like climbing a ladder. It's all footwork," Nick says. "The New has a lot of variety in the sense that it's a dead vertical and the holds require you to use a lot of footwork." He describes it as a benchmark of sorts. With the technical abilities required to climb the New River Gorge, if you do well there, you'll do well anywhere.

But you don't have to start off good at anything. "A majority of what we see at Adventures on the Gorge is families who don't have a lot of experience, if any at all," Nick says. "Adventures on the Gorge is more set up for guiding. We don't do a whole lot of teaching—we just take them out for a fun day of rock climbing." With everything from verticals to low angular walls, the New River Gorge can accommodate nearly any style a climber could wish to try or improve. "It's all sandstone, which is the hardest in the world. The rock is very solid, and when you're putting gear into a wall you have the confidence that the gear will hold," Nick says.

Experienced or not, climbers typically hang out around the top of the gorge on the sandstone belt hundreds of feet up. "You start in the trees. It's a very cool vibe—lots of biodiversity with a jungle-y feel," Nick says. "You start climbing on this clean, perfect sandstone. When you get above the trees you look out with this incredible view of the entire gorge." Climbers can socialize with other climbers at the more popular and easily accessible areas or, if you're willing to walk, you can find solitude. "You can definitely escape the crowds if that's something you're looking to do," Nick says. "As far as the climbing goes, people are usually pretty psyched. You can always tell people how great the New River Gorge is, but you can see it on their faces when they realize how good it is."

written by KATIE GRIFFITH
photos courtesy of ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE

ROCK CLIMBING

DATES
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AGES
Must be at least 8 years old

PRICING
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The SUP Race

Stand up paddleboarding exemplifies the wild and wonderful people and outdoors in the New River Gorge.

THE BOUNCE OF WATER beneath your board, the crowd gathered on the shoreline rooting you on, the colossal bridge overhead—this is how it feels to participate in the SUP (Stand Up Paddleboard) Race. In the New River Gorge, this event is a day of both adventure and camaraderie.

"I started this race to get people involved with the sport," says Melanie Seiler, the race's founder and lead organizer. Melanie has been the sole director of the race, which takes place the third week in September each year, for five years. She hopes to spread awareness of her favorite sport and get a community of paddleboarders together to essentially surf and enjoy the gorge.

The all-day event includes demonstrations for beginners, multiple races, professional photography and videography, an emcee playing upbeat music, and delicious local food. "On the morning of the race you have to drive down to Fayette Station, which is a big rapid at the base of the bridge at the bottom of the gorge. The drive down is gorgeous and you really get a sense for the immensity of the place," says Ian Smith, last year's winner.

In 2014 the competition had more than 30 racers. People travel from all over the country to attend, from the Carolinas and Florida to California and Colorado. "This is an event for all levels of boarders. We want people to learn about this sport and want to try it," Melanie says.

Paddleboarding can be a sport for all ages. For beginners, Ian and Melanie suggest starting with a friend to motivate you, then getting professional instruction to assure proper safety and technique. Ian also owns his own stand up paddleboard company, SurfSUP Adventures, and has taught people from age 7 to 78.

On race day, two competitions take place. The first is an attainment race—paddleboarders paddle upstream against the current, through one rapid, and then back to the beach. The second is the downriver race, where participants paddle through a few rapids and go through

More than 30 racers compete in the 2014 downriver race, and going through the rapids is a fun challenge each year. This year's Stand Up Paddleboard Race will take place in September and be tons of fun for all ages.

SUP RACE
Sunday
Sept. 20, 2015
noon

Fayette Station. The races are separated by gender, and the winner is determined by adding the scores of both races. "Everyone congregates on a little beachy spot on the riverbank where Melanie always has a crew of amazing partners doing paddle lessons and demos and helping people out with gear," Ian says.

Organizers say the crowd for the SUP Race is wild. Gauley Festival in nearby Summersville also takes place this weekend, so the area is packed with white water fanatics. "You feel like you're really a part of something. You get to see how large the community really is," Ian says.

Ian says the race stands out because it represents the West Virginia way of life. "After the race you are shuttled back to your car via a classic New River Gorge shuttle bus over crazy roads that twist and turn as much as the river does. If you've never been on a rafting trip shuttle bus, this is the chance to come see what it's all about," he says. "You won't find a better atmosphere than the bus ride back after the race. Melanie does an amazing job keeping this event authentic, so people from all over the country can see how amazing West Virginia is."

When all is said and done, participants enjoy an epic after-party, including dinner from Adventures on the Gorge while videos from the day play. Last year's grand prize was a handcrafted paddleboard trophy and West Virginia moonshine. Runners-up also get exciting prizes, from cabin rentals and gift certificates to paddleboarding gear. For the first three years, proceeds went to the local American Red Cross, but beginning last year, the funds went even closer to home. "When one of our raft guides, Brian Jennings, passed away from cancer, we decided to donate the money to his high school alma mater's outdoor club," Melanie says. "It's a small club just getting started. This is something Brian would love that is donated in his remembrance."

written by TESSA BONNSTETTER
photos courtesy of ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE

The Biggest Day of the Year

The annual Bridge Day celebration in Fayetteville draws thousands for one of the biggest events in the state.

STATELY AND PICTURESQUE, the New River Gorge Bridge just outside Fayetteville is one of the most recognizable landmarks in all 24,000 square miles of West Virginia. The steel arch bridge stretches more than 3,000 feet over the New River. Its arch alone is 1,700 feet long. A feat of engineering, the bridge carries thousands of cars, trucks, and tractor-trailers across the New River Gorge each day, turning what was once a 45-minute journey into a 45-second afterthought.

But once a year all traffic stops. The bridge is closed, its traffic rerouted. Visitors from near and far swarm its rust-colored trusses, some taking walks along its length, others zip-lining from apex to foot. Still others jump. One after another, men and women dive headlong into the air. Split seconds after their feet clear the bridge, the free-fallers are yanked back up by the pull of unfettered parachutes, cheered on by spectators along the bridge and within the gorge. It's the annual Bridge Day celebration, and it's the biggest event in town.

"When you go on to the bridge for the first time and look over, it's stunning," says Sally Kiner, executive director of the Fayetteville Convention & Visitors Bureau. Three-hundred-and-sixty-degree views from 876 feet in the air show off the New River Gorge in its unspoiled glory. "On a bright sunny day in late October—that's when the leaves are just perfect."

Bridge Day takes place every third Saturday of October to commemorate the 1977 completion of the bridge construction. "It was formed by state statute. It's not a normal festival," says Sharon Cruikshank, an organizer with the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce. "Bridge Day is on a federal highway, the main connector for two interstates. They felt that if they created it through the state Legislature, it would always be protected."

One of the world's largest extreme sporting events, Bridge Day is the only day of the year one of the world's longest single arch bridges is closed for people to walk, let alone BASE jump. Bridge Day shuts down all four lanes of U.S. Route 19. The festival is, officially, only six hours long, but the bridge is closed from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. to prepare for and then clean up after the event. "During that time you're detouring tractor-trailer traffic, commerce, and normal people," Sharon says. "It does cause issues for people taking the detour, but it's much quicker than it used to be." After more than 30 years, the process has been streamlined. More than 20 in-house Bridge Day volunteers are assisted by Boy Scouts, state police, sheriff's deputies, the National Park Service, and the Department of Highways, all to make sure that the event's organized pandemonium runs smoothly.

"When Bridge Day first started there were no BASE jumpers. There were no rappellers.

LEFT Bridge Day attracts thousands to the New River Gorge every third Saturday of October.

People came to walk on the bridge and enjoy the fall weather," Sally says. Now celebrating its 36th year, what started with a couple thousand people enjoying leisurely walks along the bridge has turned into an event for more than 100,000.

"In the late 1980s the crowds started increasing," says Benjy Simpson, the 25-year coordinator for the Bridge Day rappel. In the mid-1990s, he says, the event saw its largest attendance, with the National Park Service estimating crowds of more than 200,000. "They'd close off the road at a stoplight a mile-and-a-half from the bridge and people would have to walk from there. Cars would be lined up another three to four miles on Route 19 in both directions." The numbers have dropped a little since then, but there's no shortage of spectators and participants, and the Bridge Day events are only getting more extravagant.

"Last year there were more than 400 BASE jumpers and we had more than 300 rappellers," Benjy says. Adventurers came from all around the world to get a taste of the action, qualifications in hand. They don't let just anyone catapult themselves from the bridge. Still, 2014 saw the most rappels the event has ever seen. "I've dropped from the bridge, I'm an adventure guy, but I get a great deal of satisfaction seeing someone come here," Benjy says. "It's a little scary, when you start sliding down a rope 850 feet above the water. It can be frightening. Then you see their eyes light up and you see the smile creeping in. It's the satisfaction of knowing people are doing something very, very unique. I've climbed in a number of places and to rappel off this bridge is something special."

Vendors and activities for spectators also continue to multiply. Those who aren't rappelling or BASE jumping can take an interactive walking tour of the structure or ride the Highline, a 700-foot zip line anchored at the bridge catwalk and stretching into the gorge below for one day only. Others choose to raft the river underneath or hike a trail to watch the activities from another angle. Fayetteville has jumped onto the excitement with the annual Bridge Day Chili Cookoff, which takes place after the bridge activities, while the popular restaurant Smokey's on the Gorge hosts the Taste of Bridge Day, an annual sampling of area restaurants.

For 2015 Bridge Day planners have called in the All Veteran Group, a group of retired veterans, to show off their parachuting skills. They're taking a 1,400-foot American flag and jumping out of Whiskey 7, a World War II military plane that carried American troops to the D-Day invasion of Normandy, France. A concert is also in the works. "Bridge Day is a one-day event, primarily, but a number of people come in earlier for other activities like white water rafting, Adventure on the Gorge's zip lines, hiking, and mountain biking," Benjy says. "People come to make it more of a destination rather than just a one-day trip."

written by KATIE GRIFFITH
photos courtesy of OFFICIAL BRIDGE DAY

LEFT The Shermans, Kirks, Greens, Reeds, and Gordons get together for a big family reunion at Adventures on the Gorge.

WHITE WATER PHOTOGRAPHY

New River Getaway

Fording rivers, facing fears, and finding new adventures, this urban family goes wild and loves it at Adventures on the Gorge.

DARYL SHERMAN, a retired teacher and self-proclaimed urbanite, never thought she'd be inclined to buckle herself into a life vest, climb into a raft, and venture headfirst into a foaming, writhing white water river. "I'm 65 and I'm not a water person. I can swim, but I don't know that if I had to save anyone I could do it," she says. But in June of 2014 she took the plunge. "All my great-nieces and nephews were yelling, 'Come on, Aunty.' So I said, 'OK. I'm in.'"

With her 70-year-old sister and a gaggle of family members beside her, Daryl dove deep into her courage, and the cool waters of the New River, and surfaced a new woman—soaking wet, white knuckled, but loving every minute. "In my heart of hearts, I was scared to death. But we had a great guide. He just allayed all my fears. Each time we took a turn he would say what I had to do. After the first dip and I saw all this water coming over me I thought we were going down, but then we came right back up and it was like, 'OK. This isn't so bad.' After about the third turn I was a pro. I was scared to death, but in the end it was wonderful."

That was day two of what became known as The West Virginia Family Vacation, a weeklong excursion into the New River Gorge made by more than 20 members of several interconnected families—among them the Kirks, Shermans, Greens, Reeds, and Gordons. This large family has its roots in California, Daryl says, where she raised her children. But like many familial clans, they dispersed over the years, chasing careers and starting families. They now live all over the east and west coasts. "My family is very close. There are about 28 of us within my immediate family when you count siblings and children and husbands," says Danielle Kirk, the mutually appointed family event coordinator. "We usually spend holidays together. And the Thanksgiving before the gorge trip we were talking about how we hadn't really done a big family vacation like this. We're normally passive. We lie around, we cook, or we go sightseeing locally."

Inspired to try something a little more hands-on, Danielle and her family found

"We usually spend holidays together. And the Thanksgiving before the gorge trip we were talking about how we hadn't really done a big family vacation like this."
DANIELLE KIRK

themselves hooked on the idea of an adventure at New River Gorge. With her family's blessing, via their regular Skype, mass texts, mass emails, and phone calls, Danielle switched to planning mode. "I did a lot of research and investigated our options and came up with my own notion of what an ideal package would be for our family." It was a challenge, Danielle admits. "We wanted to have an adventure, but we are not a 'rough it' family. We didn't want to camp and cook beans. My mother needed a shower and a bathroom. My father wanted air conditioning. My sisters wanted beds."

Danielle reached out to Shauna King, senior reservationist at Adventures on the Gorge, and the two planned the perfect getaway, a package that would include deluxe vacation home rentals—one at the 5,000-square-foot Lynn's Pond House and one at the four-bedroom Falcon Ridge home—and activities like massages, a hike, trust exercises, and a four-acre woodland ropes course called the TimberTrek Aerial Adventure Park. "We had such a broad range of ages (12 to 70) and experience levels. We wanted to have a lot to do but nothing that would be too stressful. I looked at every single physical activity, then my family had to vote on the activities, and then we came up with a final list."

On that list were family favorites like dining in town at places like Secret Sandwich Society in Fayetteville, family cook-offs, movie nights, singing, and playing games at the house as well as a few out-of-the-box activities meant to get the adrenaline pumping. "We hiked and looked out over the gorge. We tried local foods. We did group exercises on working together and trusting each other. We even did paintballing in the woods. I ended up being like General Patton and my sister and her husband turned out to be the best sharpshooters," Danielle says.

Large though the family may be, they agree on one thing. "At the end of the day it was one of the best experiences we've ever had as a family. It doesn't take much to entertain us, but the services were so amazing. We met so many amazing people who worked there—from our hiking guide to our rafting guide to Shauna," Danielle says. "The activities we did brought us a new perspective on one another. We were exhausted by the time we left, but it was a fantastic experience."

written by MIKENNA PIEROTTI
photographed by WHITEWATER PHOTOGRAPHY

GRAB A PADDLE

No matter your experience level, find a white water trip for you.

EASY
Upper New River
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Upper New Overnight
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$279-$329

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Summer, Ages 8+
$99-129

Family Lower New
Summer, Ages 9+
$94-$144

EXCITING
Rapid Run
Spring & Summer, Ages 12+
$84-$119

Lower New River
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$94-$144

Upper/Lower Two Day
Ages 12+
$169-219

Lower New Overnight
Spring & Summer, Ages 12+
$279-$329

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Lower Gauley River
Fall
Ages 14+
$109-$184

Spring/Summer
Gauley
Summer
Ages 15+
$109-$159

EXPERT
Upper Gauley River
Fall, Ages 15+
$109-$184

Gauley Overnight
Fall, Ages 15+
$319-$369

Gauley Marathon
Fall, Ages 16+
$129-$229

Double Upper Gauley
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Loving the New

Locals pull on their boots and gloves and give back to the river that gives them so much.

RIVERS ACCUMULATE TRASH. It's their lot, on the planet, to carry things downstream. But a beloved river is cleaned up in turn by those who appreciate it and, by that measure, the New River gets lots of love.

"This river sustains so much life in its 250 miles—people use it for drinking water and irrigation and recreation," says Adventures on the Gorge raft guide Kerren Hall. "High water washes all this garbage downstream and it collects in the eddies and up in the wood piles. We're responsible to be the stewards—to clean that up."

In the 1990s, when as many as a couple dozen outfitters and rafting companies plied the New River, each of them maintained a different section of the river, Kerren says. But several years ago, the survivors of the last decade's consolidations decided they'd band together to deep clean a single section after the high waters recede each spring. "It's all the outfitters and their organization, the West Virginia Professional River Outfitters, along with the National Park Service and the watershed groups—Plateau Action Network here and New River Conservancy from Virginia and North Carolina. They all team up on one day and bring as many rafts and volunteers as they can," she says. Volunteers wear river shoes and heavy gloves, and the park service provides dumpsters—and that can be a significant contribution. "Last year there were a bunch of female raft guides on a raft. They had these tools New River Conservancy brings, made of rebar with a tee on the top," she says. "Say you're in waist-deep water and can't feel where tires are. You take that thing and shove it in, hook a tire, and pull it up—this is really hard work. Those girls pulled out 50 tires and piled them on one 16-foot raft. Everybody was filthy dirty but just laughing. There were over 100 tires pulled out of that one eddy that day."

That annual cleanup goes a long way toward keeping trash levels in check. But a river as big as the New needs all the love it can get and, in early 2011, Kerren, along with her roommate, was inspired to do more. Hiking at a favorite

spot, they came across a scene that shocked them. "There's a trail that goes to the base of Hawks Nest dam. It's all solid rock from being scoured, with huge boulders on it, and climbers and fishermen go down there. It's utterly beautiful—you're looking up at Lovers' Leap and the Hawks Nest cliff up above the dam," she says. "But the water that year had gotten so high, all the plastic pop bottles had washed over the dam and were literally two feet deep all along the shore."

The friends felt motivated to organize a trash cleanup. They applied to be part of the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection's annual Make It Shine event that provides gloves, bags, and disposal for volunteers every April at sanctioned cleanups statewide. "Brookfield Power, which owns the dam, paid for food for the 60-plus volunteers who came out," Kerren says. "The morning of the cleanup, the river was at 45,000 (cubic feet per second)—really high—and the power company's engineer wasn't sure we could do it. But the garbage was piled even higher than that, from when the river had been at 100,000," she says. "It's a steep drop to the river from there, but when the people came out, they were like monkeys, filling up bag after bag after bag, hauling them up the hill. When we were done, three hours later, there was one-and-a-half tons in bags. Nobody had ever done a cleanup there before—we cleaned up 20 years' worth of plastic."

Since that 2011 cleanup, Kerren has organized annual Make It Shine events for Plateau Action Network, alternating between the site below Hawks Nest dam and an accessible spot on a major tributary, Wolf Creek.

The cumulative effect of decades of river love is tangible, says Maura Kistler, a longtime member of the local outdoor recreation community and co-owner of outdoor gear shop Water Stone Outdoors in Fayetteville. Maura herself started participating in cleanups when she was a raft guide trainee in the early '90s. "The combined river community made a determination that they were going to knock down the baseline trash level. We yanked extraordinary amounts of tires and other trash out of the river on rafts over the years, and those pickups have resulted in a noticeably less trashy river." The decades of commitment demonstrates locals' attitude toward the river, Maura says. "This community doesn't just use the resource. We protect it and maintain it. That's an important part of the ethos of the rafting companies and the recreational community."

It also lets visitors experience the river without distraction. "The New River is such a powerful and amazing river," Kerren says. "I feel so grateful that I get to live here and be a part of it, and I hope that every time I take someone down the river they leave with a sense of the majesty of nature."

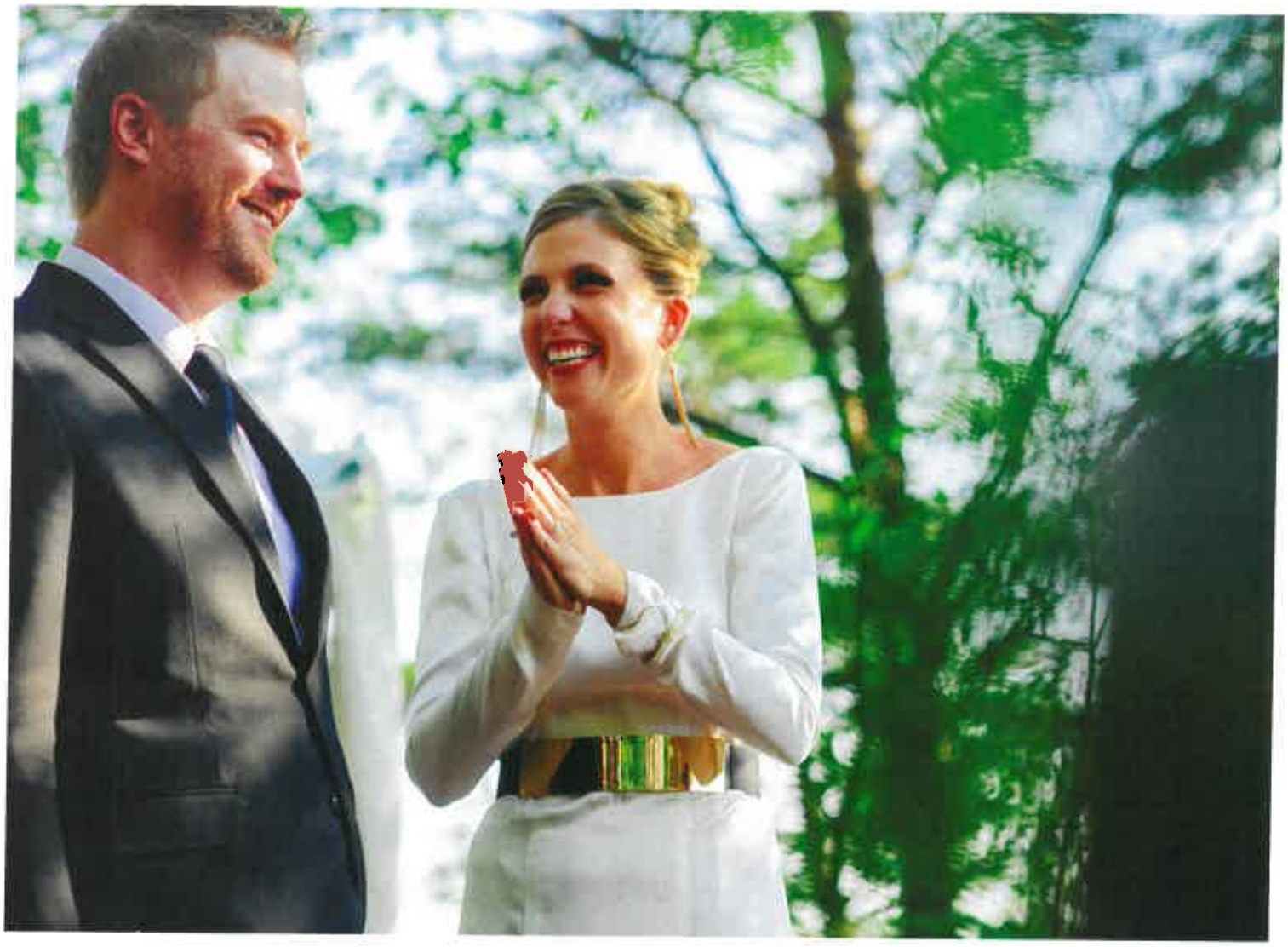
written by PAM KASEY
photos courtesy of ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Adventures on the Gorge staff take a moment to enjoy the scenery. The day ends as the group hauls the collection of trash up to the trucks. Volunteers collect litter from a nearby beach.

Choosing Your Adventure

Though we encourage progression, this flowchart will help define appropriate activities based on age, experience, and skill level.

*Varying levels of difficulty



Weddings in the Wild

This adventure resort has added event planning and beautiful weddings.

UP UNTIL THE PAST FEW YEARS, taking in the vast view from the deck at Adventures on the Gorge was something mainly experienced by avid white water rafters and zip-liners. But now that gorgeous scenery has become the backdrop for even the girliest brides, thanks in large part to the weddings planned there by the resort's own Jessica Campbell.

Jessica had a connection to Adventures on the Gorge before—her husband, Brian, is one of the main administrators. "I've always been a party planner," she says. "My husband offered me this job because it is something I really enjoy doing. It comes naturally to me. I work really long hours, but it doesn't feel like it because it's so social and I love it so much."

Countless couples can attest to that. Lane Litz and Cameron Frecklington were married at the gorge in July 2014. Cameron says Jessica was amazing—high energy, helpful, and accommodating—and the venue could not have been better. "The place worked out fantastically for us. We rented two of the big cabins and had barbecues and drinks at one for family and VIP guests, and we rented a couple smaller sportsman cabins where all my friends slept. It was like a big grownup camping trip for them," he says. "They're all 30- to 35-year-old grown men but they got to act like children there."

ABOVE Lane Litz and Cam Frecklington traveled from Asia to marry at Adventures on the Gorge.

The amenities and accommodations of the resort have everyone covered. "Every single person—from my uncles to my friends from Canada—was blown away by the complex," Cameron says. "They thought the view down the river was great. We went white water rafting, to the pool, everything. Everyone was just blown away by West Virginia scenery."

The number of special events like weddings at Adventures on the Gorge has dramatically grown since Jessica started as catering manager five years ago. Her first summer there were seven events scheduled. Now there are more than 100 events each year.

EVENTS
WITH A VIEW*

Make the most of your wedding weekend with one of these unique packages.

OPTION ONE Daytime ceremony on the lower deck (265 capacity) overlooking the gorge, with reception at Smokey's on the Gorge (170 capacity). ▸ **11 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

OPTION TWO Daytime ceremony on the lower deck of Smokey's on the Gorge (265 capacity) with after-party inside (170 capacity). ▸ **11 a.m. to 4 p.m., after-party from 4 to 9 p.m. or 7 p.m. to midnight**

OPTION THREE Enjoy a ceremony and reception followed by an after-party at Rendezvous Lodge (170 capacity) ▸ **11 a.m. to 4 p.m., after-party from 8 p.m. to midnight**

OPTION FOUR Canyon Falls Swimming Hole post-wedding celebration. This package combines three locations: the lower deck (265 capacity), Smokey's on the Gorge (170 capacity), and Canyon Falls Swimming Hole for a daytime wedding ceremony and reception followed by a pool after-party. ▸ **after-party begins at 7 p.m.**

OPTION FIVE Get married on the lower deck of Smokey's and then enjoy the deck as it's converted into a beautiful reception area (80 capacity). ▸ **available after 6 p.m. on Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. or 5 to 10 p.m. other days**

OPTION SIX Enjoy two amazing views from the lower deck of Smokey's on the Gorge (265 capacity) and Canyon Falls Swimming Hole. ▸ **7:30 p.m. to midnight**

OPTION SEVEN For an intimate two-day gathering, invite 25 close friends and family to luxury vacation homes that sleep anywhere from 7 to 14 people, just minutes from the New River Gorge.

**All events exclude food, alcohol, gratuity, and tax. An elegant white tent is available for all outside events, in the event of inclement weather.*

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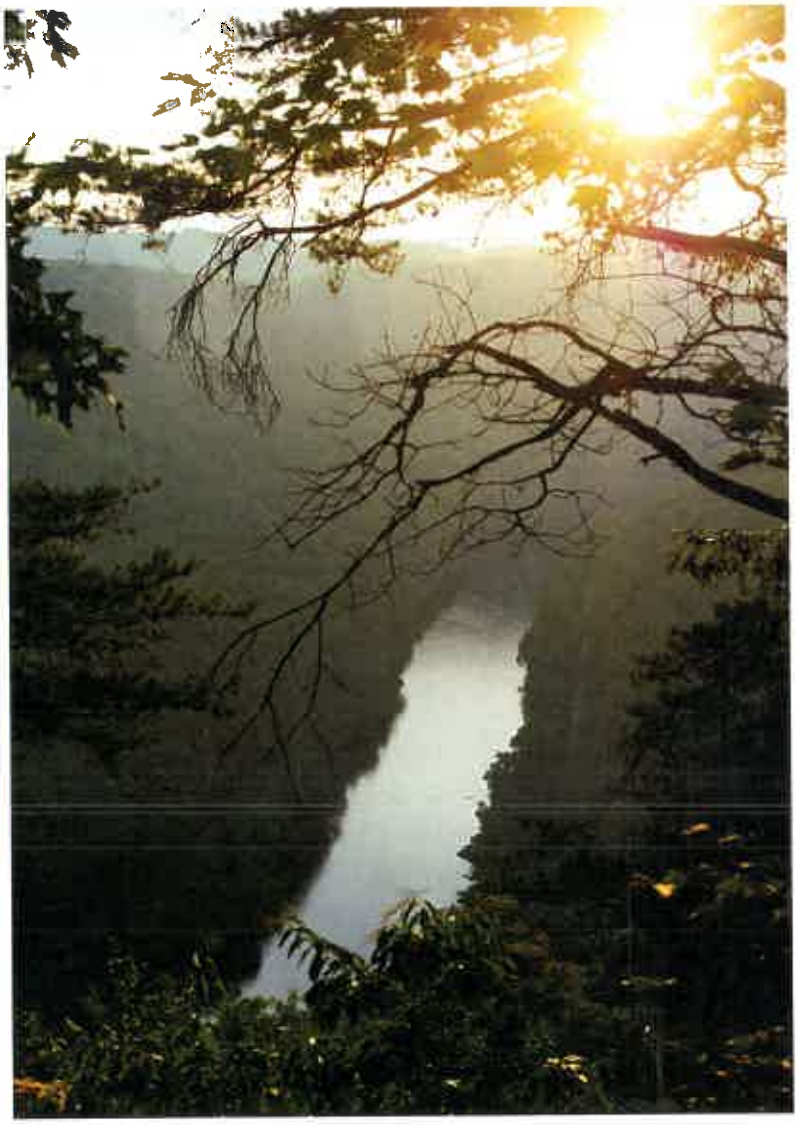

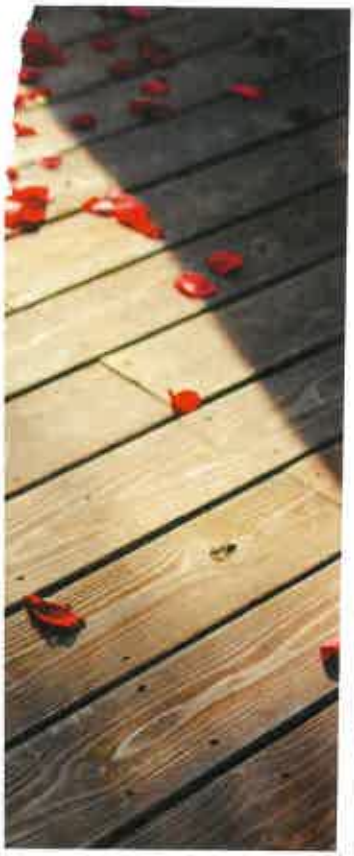

Weddings at Adventures on the Gorge bring people together from all over the world, like for this special wedding of Lane and Cameron in July 2014. The couple married on the deck of Smokey's on the Gorge and continued their celebration all weekend long.

Several wedding options are available at the gorge. From receptions at Smokey's on the Gorge restaurant to after-parties at Rendezvous Lodge to soirees at the Canyon Falls Swimming Hole—whatever the vision, the Adventures on the Gorge team excels and inspires. "We host all kinds of weddings, on all levels of the pricing spectrum. We've even had people jump in the pool in their dress clothes. It's always so fun," Jessica says.

Word of mouth has helped turn this tourist hotspot into a destination wedding go-to. The adventure resort is a two-in-one for many wedding parties and guests, making it an even more meaningful and unique wedding site. Family and friends of the bride and groom often arrive early or stay days late simply to take in the countless outdoor activities—from white water rafting and rock climbing to hiking, zip-lining, and just plain camping.

Lane, a Charleston native, booked the resort for her big day all the way from China. She and Cameron chose to have a Kriya Yoga ceremony there. "We'd decided we were going to have the wedding in America, and if were having it in America, of course we were going to have it in West Virginia because West Virginia is beautiful and pretty amazing," she says. "I looked for venues around Charleston and I really didn't find anything I liked. We wanted something unique, and we wanted to make a long weekend out of it." Adventures on the Gorge had everything they wanted and more—even cornhole.

"The wedding was a two-day affair with a barbecue the night before and all of the amazing amenities that Adventures on the Gorge has to offer. It was wonderful to show friends and family from out of town and the country the beautiful mountains of West Virginia and the New River Gorge," Lane says. "We went white water rafting a few days after the wedding with family, which was also an event highlight."

Rain or shine, Jessica and her amazing staff work one-on-one with the couples and the venues to make sure each wedding goes off without a hitch. "Last summer the weather was so stormy and unpredictable, but we made it work for each wedding, and nothing was ever postponed," Jessica says. When it comes to décor, while the beautiful gorge speaks for itself, Jessica and her staff arrange each venue precisely to meet the couple's needs. "We make it so everyone can enjoy the day. We'll do all of the background stuff, from the setup to taking down."

Lane says that was one thing she didn't even have to ask about during her wedding weekend. "Jessica was the most amazing person in the whole world," she says. "I had bought candles that were too tall for the wedding and she went right out to Walmart the day of the wedding and bought tea candles for me. I didn't even have to ask her. She just did it."

Jessica says her favorite part of the whole process is when the wedding party sees the wedding venue set up for the first time, before the guests have arrived. "Even people from West Virginia who have never seen the gorge in person are blown away," she says. "Each wedding is so different from the last one, and with the gorge as the backdrop, they're each beautiful."

written by TESSA BONNSTETTER
photographed by THE OBERPORTS

Cabin Fever

The newest lodging option at Adventures on the Gorge combines the comforts of a hotel with the cozy simplicity of a cabin.

DIFFERENT PEOPLE WANT different things from a vacation. Some want to get back to the land, roughing it with little more than a tent and a fire pit. Others are more interested in creature comforts—they want the freedom to cook their own meals in a gourmet kitchen and to slip into a hot tub at the end of a long and active day. Still others fall somewhere in the middle—they want a roof overhead, a bed underneath them at night, and air conditioning to boot, but they care less about frills than simple comfort.

Adventures on the Gorge has something for vacationers who fall anywhere on that broad spectrum—from luxury vacation homes to rustic cabins to simple campsites. But until last year, there was still a gap in lodging at the resort. "Basically it was the void of couples and people who don't want to camp, but also don't want to cook for themselves in a nice big cabin or anything like that," says Krista Shumaker, resort operations director at Adventures on the Gorge. "They just want to come here, enjoy our activities, enjoy our restaurants, and have a nice place to sleep at night." That's why, in 2014, Adventures on the Gorge added a smattering of new cabins to the mix, called the Sunnyside Cabin Suites.

The idea was to offer all the convenience of a hotel room with the coziness of a cabin in the mountains—you're at an adventure resort, after all. "They still have that feel and look of a cabin, but when you go inside it's similar to walking into a very nice hotel room," Krista says. Inside there are beds—either one king or two queens, depending on the unit—a kitchenette, and a bathroom, complete with towels, toiletries, and running water. The amenities are simple but top-notch—a

LEFT The new Sunnyside Cabin Suites offer guests a hotel room feel with the appeal of a cabin in the woods.

The charm of the Sunnysides is also in the way they feel secluded from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

far cry from the camping equipment you'd need for a night outdoors. But to get to this hotel room you don't walk through a big tiled lobby, take an elevator, and wander down a long carpeted hallway looking for your room number. At Adventures on the Gorge you drive through the woods into a campground, park your car next to a small cabin, and step inside. "We wanted to stay true to the rest of the resort," Krista says. "That's why they're cabins, not a hotel." Each cabin holds two units, and you can rent out the whole thing or just one room.

The charm of the suites is also in the way they feel secluded from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. They're nestled into the forest surrounding the New River Gorge and offer wooded views from every window. Each cabin also features a large wraparound deck stocked with patio furniture—the perfect setting for a tranquil morning with a cup of coffee or to unwind after a long day of outdoor adventure. "That's a big part of the cabin experience," Krista says. "We wanted to include as much of that as we could."

ABOVE Sunnysides are conveniently located near the Mill Creek campground and just a short walk from all resort amenities.

written by SHAY MAUNZ
photos courtesy of ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE

MORE
LODGING OPTIONS

DELUXE CABINS These two, three, and four bedroom rental cabins are built with natural materials and boast vaulted ceilings, quality furnishings, and hot tubs. They're also located just across the street from the Canyon Rim Visitors Center, the perfect home base for all your adventures on the New River Gorge. **adventuresonthegorge.com/lodging/deluxe ▸ $259–$459, capacity varies**

MOUNTAIN CABINS These basic cabins are simple but cozy—perfect if you're looking for a snug place to relax after an active day. The Sportsman Cabins have one large bedroom that can sleep 11 to 25 people and are equipped with the basic necessities—beds, fridge, microwave, and coffee pot—that you need after a fun day. **adventuresonthegorge.com/lodging/mountain. ▸ $189–$289, capacity varies**

RUSTIC CABINS A no-frills option for those who want to camp—but don't want to rough it. Rustic cabins have basic amenities like electricity, air conditioning, and beds, plus a fire ring and picnic table outside. They're within walking distance of a shared bathroom facility. **adventuresonthegorge.com/lodging/rustic ▸ $69–$89, capacity varies**

CAMPING There are two separate camping areas at Adventures on the Gorge, so that every camper gets the experience he's looking for. The 35-acre family camping facility is located on the main campus, and geared toward families and people who want a more quiet, peaceful camping experience. The 39-acre social campground, called the Mountain State Outdoor Center, is located just off AOTG's main campus and has its own bathhouse, camp goods store, and recreational field. A shuttle runs between the campground and the main campus on Saturday nights. Both campgrounds also have platform tents for rent, for those who want to camp but don't want to set up their own tent. **adventuresonthegorge.com/lodging/camping ▸ Capacity varies, $29–$49 for platform tents, $5–$15 for camping**

LUXURY VACATION RENTALS Each luxury vacation home has its own unique personality, but they all boast upscale amenities like private hot tubs, gourmet kitchens, fine linens, fireplaces, and breathtaking views. A few even have a direct view of the New River Gorge Bridge. **adventuresonthegorge.com/lodging/vacation-rentals ▸ $450–$1,175, capacity varies, off-site**

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Getting Down to Business

The New River Gorge is not just another pretty place—it also has what businesses need to thrive.

ACCESS, WORKFORCE, LOW COST of operation: When it comes to business, the New River Gorge has a lot to offer. And the healthy, recreation-based lifestyle can't be beat. "Our region offers a haven from the corporate grind without having to give up the luxury of success," says Lillian Graning, chief communications officer for the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority (NRGRDA).

Access to markets is fundamental. Gorge communities lie within 500 miles of two-thirds of U.S. population and one-third of Canada's—and the transportation network brings those markets within easy reach. "Interstates 64 and 77 and U.S. Route 19 all cross the heart of our region," Lillian says. "And CSX and Norfolk Southern are less than a day's transport to the Norfolk port in Virginia." The area is also served by the Raleigh County Memorial Airport's 6,750- and 5,000-foot runways.

Residents enjoy great mobility options, too: Amtrak's Cardinal Line between New York and Chicago makes twice-daily stops, and ViaAir flies daily to Charlotte, North Carolina's international airport.

Rich resources in forestry, oil, and coal have long made the gorge a natural location for businesses in those industries. The region offers particular advantages for forestry and wood products, Lillian says, due to the combination of resource and local and state incentives. Other sectors the region is especially well-suited for include manufacturing, tourism, distribution and logistics, agribusiness and food systems, and back-office operations.

Finding the perfect site is easy—the four-county region offers plenty of full-service locations. At Fayetteville, in the heart of the region, Wolf Creek Business Park's 1,000 acres is laid out for a mix of residential and commercial space. Billed as a "Live, Learn, Work, and Play Community," Wolf Creek's business tenants include regional craft brewery Bridge Brew Works and international

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Glade Creek Park offers "ready-to-go" commercial and industrial sites with a view. International tunneling equipment manufacturer The Robbins Company has a facility at Wolf Creek Business Park in Fayetteville. Commercial operations find a comfortable home at PineCrest Business and Technology Park in Beckley.

A VIRTUAL TOUR

THE NEW RIVER GORGE Regional Development Authority's online site-search tool, choosenrg.com, makes it easy to explore. Search by existing buildings or developable sites, for sale or lease, and for retail, commercial, or industrial use. Results appear on a clickable map with photographs and property details: square footage or acres, utilities, transportation, and others. Additional tools detail businesses operating in the region and market and workforce demographics.

tunneling equipment manufacturer The Robbins Company. Business and residential lots emphasize the natural environment, with easy access to an on-site trail network and wetlands boardwalk.

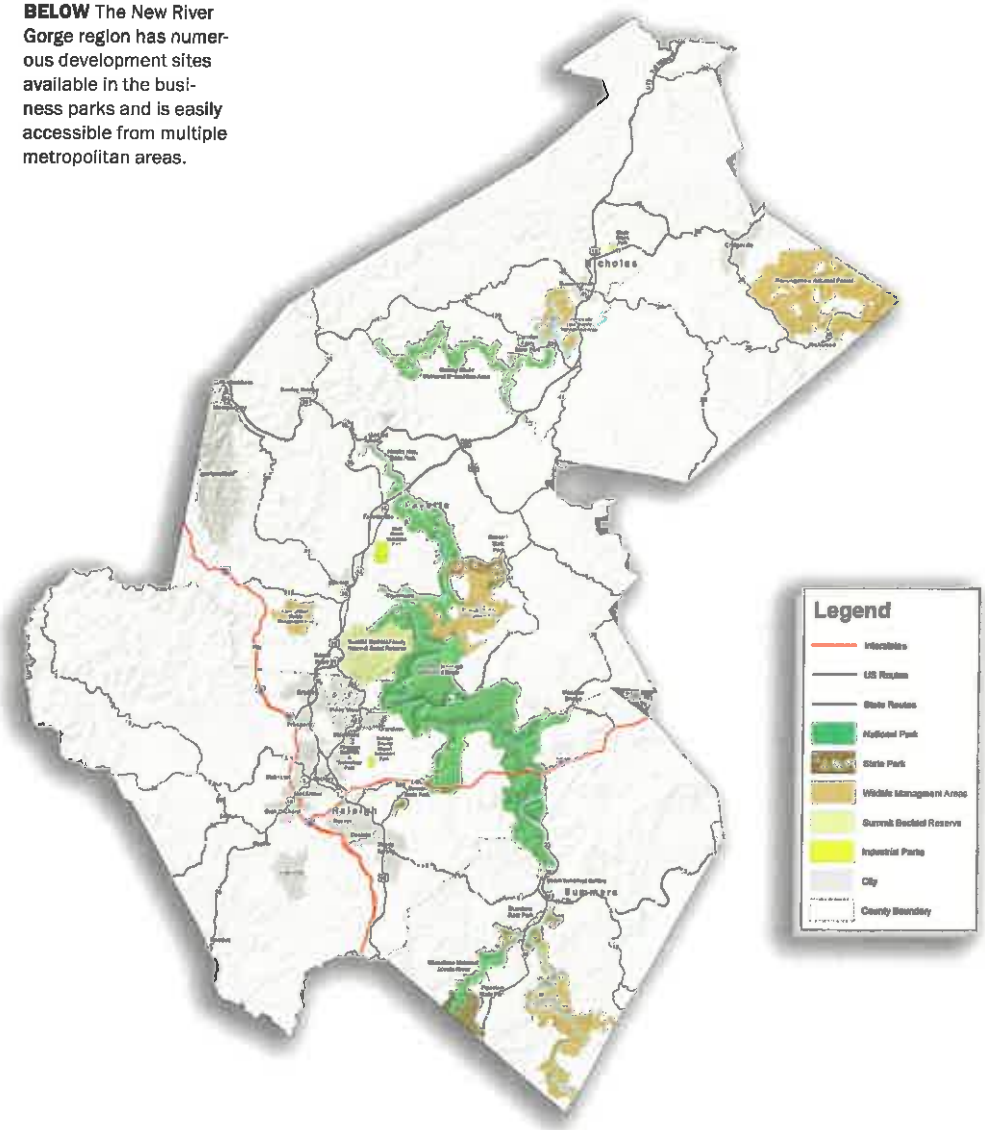
Toward the north end of the U.S. 19 corridor, Glade Creek Park's 125 acres are zoned for small and large commercial and industrial use. A "ready-to-go" development plan speeds up building permits and utility connections. And Beckley, to the south, holds several options. The PineCrest Business and Technology Park offers everything from predesigned shell space to greenfield sites set in rolling hills near downtown. At Bradley Square, 80 developable acres are pre-qualified by power provider AEP for data center use, and the Raleigh County Airport Industrial Park is zoned for both light and heavy industrial use near the runway.

Office space satisfies the most demanding tenants. In the Upper Kanawha Valley Technology Community Building, near the West Virginia University Institute of Technology in Montgomery 25 miles away, tenants have access to 18- and 35-seat conference suites, an 80-seat distance delivery auditorium with a projector system, and other amenities. And the Hinton Technology Building lies within walking distance of shipping options, restaurants, and other downtown amenities. "The office space is professional and secure, has covered off-street parking, and has excellent connectivity," says Ted Kula of defense and intelligence contractor ManTech International Corporation. He likes his short commute. "The small-town atmosphere is also important to me. Being able to work in a high-tech environment in Hinton is really the best of both worlds."

Local and state development officials treat business prospects with great care, Lillian says. "Prospects immediately have access to mayors, the county commissions, our authority, the West Virginia Development Office, and the governor, all working for them in a community effort to meet their needs," she says. "Lots of regions are not team players—we really are." A prime example of that is workforce preparation. While the region's workforce is well educated—80 percent have high school degrees and 12 percent have bachelor's degrees or higher—the higher education system's quick-response training program can also provide tailored coursework. "ViaAir came to the airport in December 2014 and they'll need aviation mechanics," Lillian says by way of example. "New River Community and Technical College created a new curriculum to give ViaAir a qualified workforce—customized and at no expense to the company."

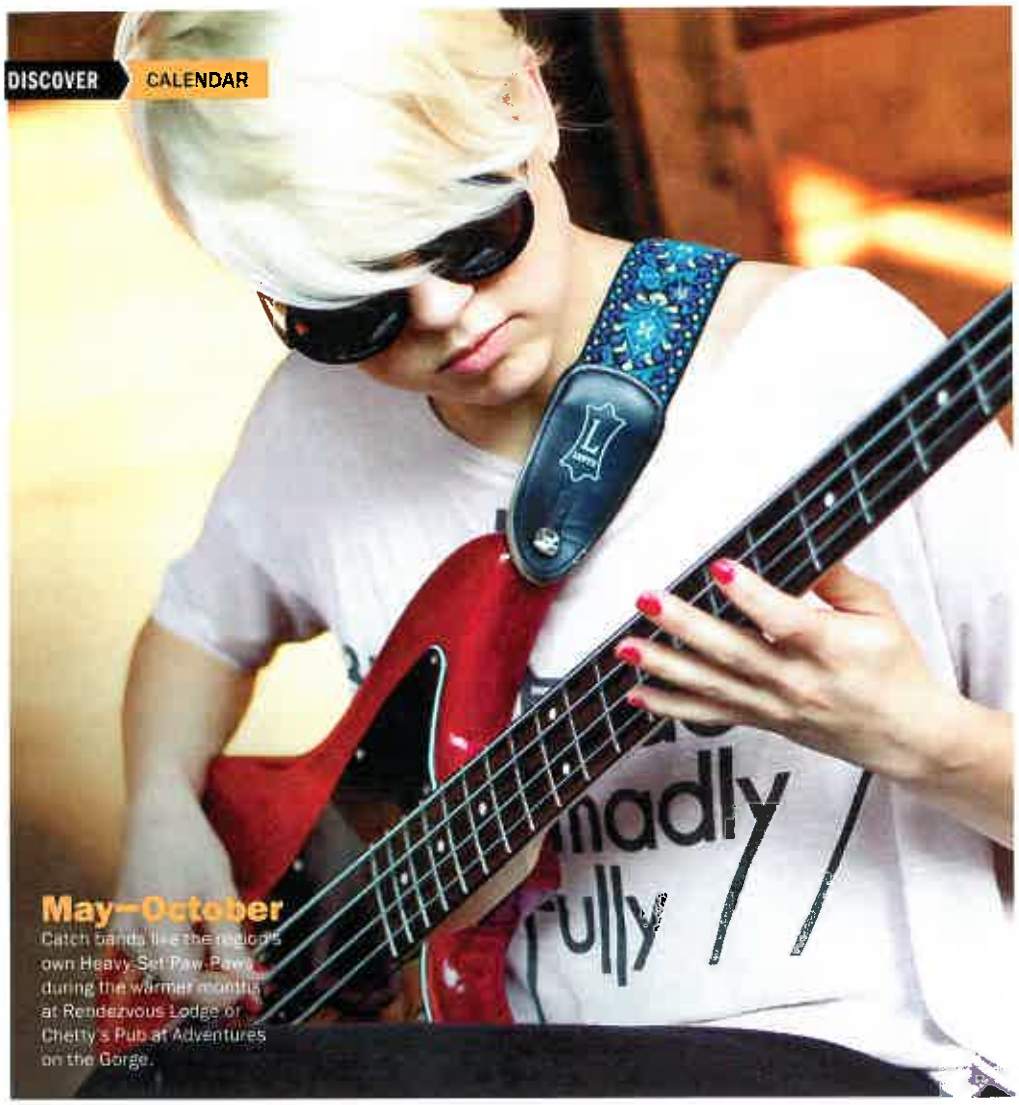
New River Gorge businesses enjoy cost of doing business
14% LOWER THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE
and energy costs
MORE THAN 18% BELOW AVERAGE

The New River Gorge region is the perfect marriage of adventure and productivity, Lillian says. "It's a place where businesses can focus on what they do and be inspired by where they are."



BELOW The New River Gorge region has numerous development sites available in the business parks and is easily accessible from multiple metropolitan areas.

written by PAM KASEY
photos courtesy of NEW RIVER GORGE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



May–October
Catch bands like the region's own Heavy Set Paw Paw during the warmer months at Rendezvous Lodge or Chetty's Pub at Adventures on the Gorge.

KENNY YOUNG

Calendar

April 25–Oct. 17

Live Music Series at Rendezvous Lodge
Rendezvous Lodge, Adventures on the Gorge, 219 Chestnutburg Road, Lansing, Sat. adventuresonthegorge.com/dining
Hear live music every Saturday night, beginning in April through October. This go-to hot spot is the perfect place to unwind after a day on the river, rock, or trail. Enjoy local bands like the Rust Kings, Wild Rumpus, the Half Bad Bluegrass Band, and Mike Snodgrass over a cold brew in the open-air tavern—part beach bar, part mountain lodge. Live music, beer on tap, and fun every night.

May 4–Oct. 12

Live Music Series at Chetty's Pub
Chetty's Pub, 219 Chestnutburg Road, Mon. 304.574.4458, visitaotg.com
Chetty's Pub is another of the exceptional dining options at Adventures on the Gorge, right in the heart of the New River Gorge. Every Monday, May through October, catch live music and specials on the eatery's world famous wings. Chetty's offers affordable dining in a casual setting at the very rim of the gorge. The restaurant also has a spacious deck overlooking the New River and multiple big-screen TVs, so you don't have to miss a minute of the game. The menu is stacked with pub fare and is the perfect place for a quick snack, a leisurely meal, or even just a nice, cold beverage.

July 3

Fourth of July at AOTG
Adventures on the Gorge, 219 Chestnutburg Road, Lansing, Fri., 304.574.2115
Nothing says summer quite like the Fourth of July, and you can start the fun early by celebrating Independence Day on July 3, 2015. Free admission.

July 3 & 4

Fourth of July at Fayetteville Town Park
125 North Court Street, Fayetteville
Sat., 304.574.0910
This local favorite has had families celebrating Independence Day the good, old-fashioned way for years. Enjoy a parade, street dance, and fireworks display in downtown Fayetteville.

Aug. 14–16

Simply Jazz and Blues Festival
Raleigh Playhouse and Theatre
403 Neville Street, Beckley
Fri., Sat., & Sun., 304.763.7059
This free music festival will also include some ticketed events. Entertainment as well as educational opportunities for young and old will be provided.

Sept. 5 & 6

CASCADE
Cascade Resort Property
225 West Maple Avenue, Fayetteville
Sat. & Sun., 434.220.4000
info@theartistfarm.com
West Virginia's premier festival of the arts is a family-friendly event. This festival will blend a carefully curated lineup of roots musical acts with a juried arts area, an outdoor recreation experience zone, craft beer, and local food.

Sept. 11

Gauley Season Opening Day
Gauley River, Summersville, Fri.
The Summersville Dam is released to fill the Gauley River in preparation for Gauley Season, September 11 through October 18, 2015. People come from all over the world for some top 10 white water action. More than 40 rapids are packed into 11 miles of river. Six Class V rapids that only Mother Nature could create and a 14-foot waterfall make the Gauley River an exciting challenge. Raft the river with expert guides who specialize in team-building and adventure. Boats and lodging fill up fast, especially on weekends, so reserve your spot early.

Sept. 18–20

Gauley Fest
Fri., Sat., & Sun.
Started in 1983, Gauley Fest has grown to become the largest paddling festival in the world. Come out for a weekend of great paddling, camping, camaraderie, live entertainment, boat raffles, and even an infamous silent auction. Proceeds from the festival support American Whitewater's river conservation

and access works throughout the nation. Entrance fees: Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, $30; Friday and Saturday, $25; Saturday only, $20.

Sept. 20

SUP Race
Fayette Station, Sun., noon
855.255.1230, visitaotg.com
Head to the bottom of the gorge for the state's only stand up paddleboard competition. This annual event will include demonstrations for beginners, multiple races, professional photography and videography, and plenty of delicious local food. Entry fees to participate. The event is free to spectators.

Sept. 21

Gauley River Animal Race
Upper Gauley River, Mon.
The Upper Gauley Animal Race has become one of the premier extreme events in the country as a downriver sprint on a legendary section of the river. Now in its 23rd year, this race has grown in notoriety and participation. West Virginia is within 500 miles of more than half of the U.S. population, and thus is the ideal site to host a world-class, high-profile white water competition.

Sept. 24–26

Create West Virginia Conference
Thurs., Fri. & Sat., createwv.org
The eighth annual Create West Virginia conference brings together hundreds of the state's community leaders, entrepreneurs, educators, technology innovators, and interested citizens for workshops, world-class keynote addresses, and networking.

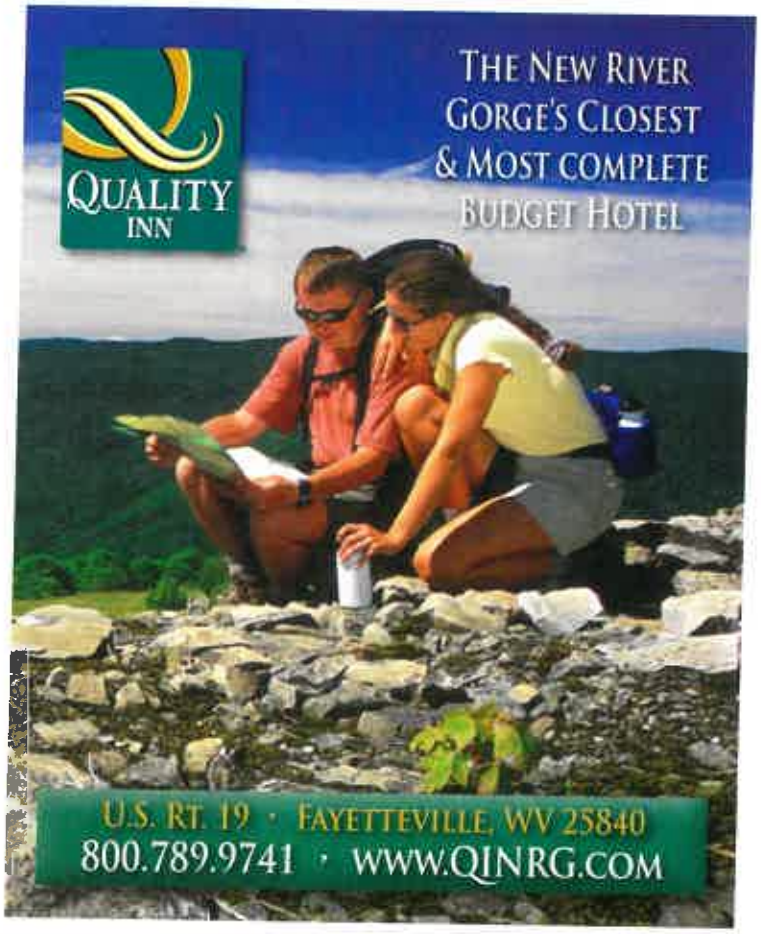
Oct. 16

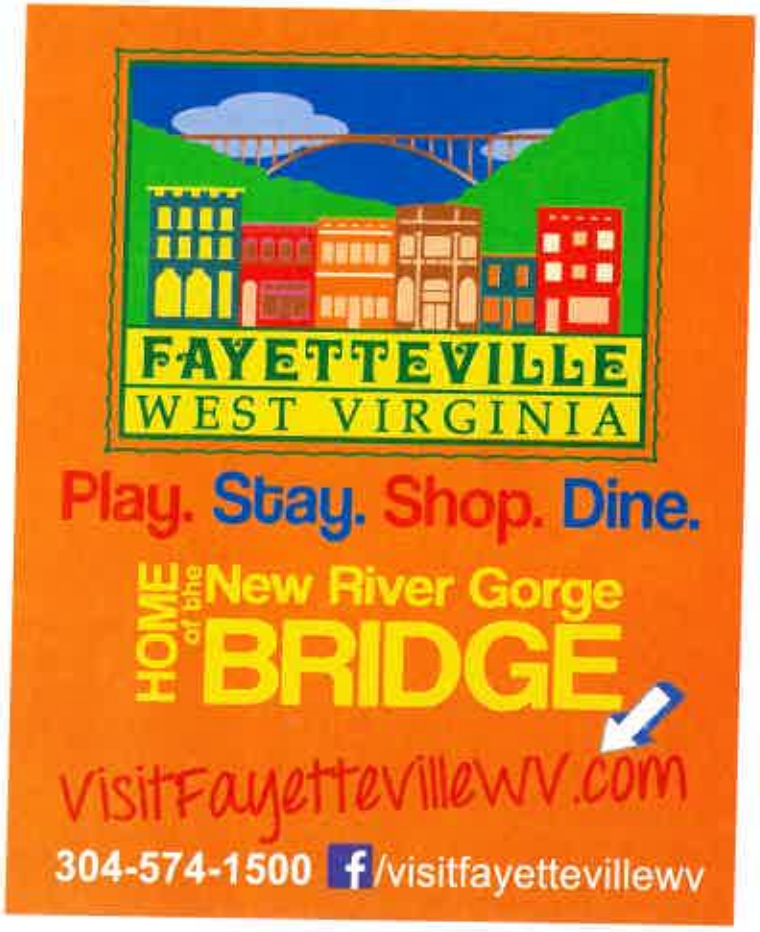
Taste of Bridge Day
Smokey's on the Gorge, 219 Chestnutburg Road
Fri., 5 p.m., 855.255.1230, visitaotg.com
Hosted by Fayetteville and Oak Hill rotary clubs. Enjoy dishes from Adventures on the Gorge restaurants as well as local favorites such as Gumbo's, Diogi's, and Maloney's. Pay just $1 per ticket.

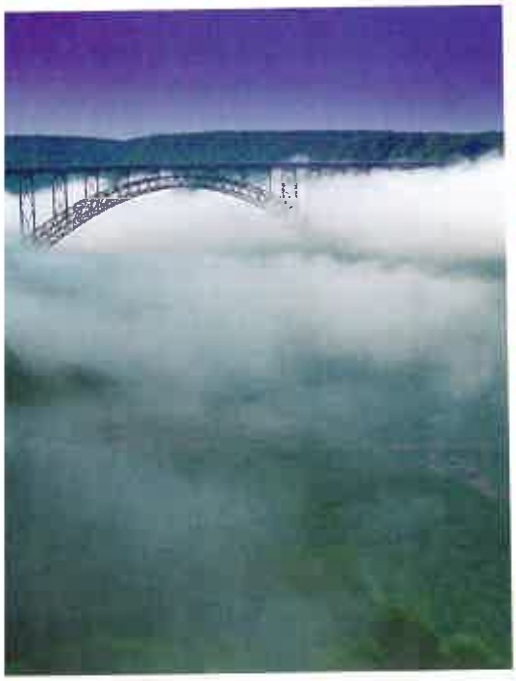
Oct. 17

Bridge Day and Chili Cook-off
New River Gorge Bridge, Sat.
officialbridgeday.com
Bridge Day celebrates 36 years. Watch BASE jumpers leap 800+ feet into the New River Gorge below. Work up an appetite? The chili cook-off in nearby downtown Fayetteville takes place from 3 to 6 p.m., right after the main events.

Bridge Jam
Cascade Resort Property
225 West Maple Avenue, Fayetteville
Sat. & Sun. noon to 9 p.m.
434.220.4000, info@theartistfarm.com
Experience the first ever Bridge Day music festival. It's the perfect accompaniment to your weekend Fayetteville itinerary.







REINVENTING THE ADVENTURE GETAWAY*

written by
PAM KASEY

photos courtesy of
ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE

* What *is* an adventure resort, anyway?

Ski resort, beach resort—a visitor can usually expect variations on the core activity with a few less intense options on the side. But when it comes to the adventure resort, Adventures on the Gorge is setting a new standard: an unprecedented range of experiences at guests' disposal in a setting that satisfies every budget and expectation.

"The way our facilities have come together and the way we're adding to them, we now have a base comparable to what you'd see at any other resort," says CEO and hospitality industry veteran Dave Hartvigsen. "And with all these adventure activities layered in, I can't think of a competitor across the U.S. that does what we do. Not at this scale."

The Legacy

Hospitality at Adventures on the Gorge is rooted in joyful decades introducing people to the river and landscape that give the resort its name. The story is legend to longtime visitors. White water outfitters Class VI River Runners, Rivermen, Mountain River Tours, and Songer Whitewater were born of the 1970s surge in river recreation. The 1972 white water film *Deliverance* had whetted public interest in taking rivers on, says senior vice president and Class VI co-founder Dave Arnold, and advances in boat construction made river running safer and more affordable. The companies grew and thrived with other local outfitters through the decades. But by the early 2000s the founders felt the industry had matured. They wanted to take their hospitality to another level and, in two actions in 2008 and 2010, the four companies merged.

BELOW This old photo shows the original Canyon Rim campus.

The initial result was a large white water outfitter with several hundred years' experience running rivers—and all possible philosophies on the subject. "Each of the four companies that came together believed they were the best company on the river," says Chief Marketing Officer Brian Campbell, an owner of Rivermen. "And we all could be, because we each defined the experience differently." At family-friendly Mountain River Tours, guides directed large, stable boats through mild rapids using oars, and guests were free to enjoy the scenery, Brian says. Less conservative Class VI gave its guests a part in the paddling and catered to a more upscale market with the best facilities on the rim of the gorge. Rivermen drew a blue-collar set and ran the river more boldly, maximizing time in the rapids, and Songer was still more aggressive in the water. "So we had the spectrum."

Bringing that spectrum into one outfitter meant the combined companies took the full range of visitor types into account as they diversified into new adventures. They added their TreeTops Canopy Tour in 2009, Gravity Zip Lines in 2011, and TimberTrek Adventure Park in 2012. "We saw an opportunity to do in aerial what we'd done for decades on the rivers," Brian says. "You could start off doing TimberTrek or TreeTops and work your way through the progression, with Gravity being more high-adventure." Along the way, they also hired expert guides for a variety of other activities: rock climbing, mountain biking, paintball, kayaking, and others.

The founders started to see a new vision. "We realized over time that we didn't just want to merge—we wanted to evolve into a new animal," Dave says. "We wanted to build up into a resort." That meant not just quality and variety but a comprehensive, all-guest-pleasing range: easy experiences for families and harder ones for outdoor enthusiasts. Lodging options at all price points. Multiple restaurants with atmospheres spanning casual, upscale, and romantic, all with great food.

And they wanted it to be world-class. To ensure that, they brought Dave Hartvigsen—"Hart"—on as CEO in 2013. "Hart is the person who really understands resorts," Dave says.

Getaways Compared

Hilton, Carlson, Intrawest, Xanterra—Hart has an expansive history in hospitality. "I've worked with or in hundreds of different properties across three continents, or probably in the thousands," he says. "You draw from all that experience when you come to a place like this and it's really helpful."

Hart appreciates the variety of water experiences available practically on the resort's doorstep. "On Summersville Lake, we can take people out on a pontoon boat or they can learn stand-up paddleboarding on flat water," he says. "If they want a float trip, the Upper New is really easy. Step it up a little more to the rapids on the Lower New, and from there the Lower Gauley and then the Upper Gauley. It's a nice sequence from placid to exhilarating." But these days, a visitor can spend an exciting week without ever going on the water. "We quickly take people out

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
The 3,000-square-foot Canyon Falls Swimming Hole has become a favorite of all ages, completed in 2012. The Canyon Rim campus was the original Class VI location built in 1978.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The TreeTops Canopy Tour zip line opened in 2008. Construction on the Mill Creek campus began in 2008. This Outcack Cabin has a private deck and hot tub. Bonsai Design built TreeTops.

into an outdoor environment where they can experience flora and fauna and they can do anything from zip-lining to hiking to ATVs to rock climbing," Hart says.

Adventures on the Gorge brings the same level of proficiency it has with white water to every activity. "What we do here requires a lot of expertise," Hart says. "What allows us to do that is, we have fantastic guides from all over the U.S. and beyond." Working alongside experts of all kinds has given guiding a whole new meaning for Roger Wilson, rafting operations director. "No matter what type of guide you are, white water or zip-lining or mountain biking or rock climbing, you get into the activity because you love it," says Roger, a native West Virginian who started guiding in the '70s and has guided out West and in Chile and Peru. "But there's a transition that happens where you become a teacher and you get to experience this thing you love to do with people who have never done it before. The longer you do it, the more you get into seeing the joy of people experiencing this for the first or second time or repeatedly. I see this in all of our guides: the fun of turning people on to new ways to become one with nature. There's a satisfaction and sense of accomplishment our guests have, and even the people who sit beside the pool share in that feeling of excitement here."

When he compares what Adventures on the Gorge is building with other adventure and resort options, Hart feels like it already stands alone. Starting from golf or tennis resorts where he says the highest adventure might be a walking trail, he ticks off some other alternatives. "The outfitters typically specialize. River outfitters usually do one thing and one thing only: rafting. A dude ranch does horseback riding and you might get indoctrinated into what it's like to be a ranch hand, but that's about it," he says. "And at Xanterra we operated a lot of the national park concessions like Grand Canyon and Yellowstone, wonderful places. At Grand Canyon, you might go on a mule ride or walk down to Phantom Ranch—those are some of the best adventures a person can do. But the diversity is not what we offer here."

"There's a satisfaction and sense of accomplishment our guests have, and even the people who sit beside the pool share in that feeling of excitement here."

ROGER WILSON

ADVENTURES ON THE WEB

IN 2015 ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE IS LAUNCHING a new website. Look for dynamically loaded pages with rich video and still imagery. "It's going to be exciting to open up and explore these pages," says CEO Dave Hartvigsen. "I've long believed a picture is worth a thousand words, so I'd much rather show people what they're going to do than try and describe it in text. These pictures and videos will just immerse you in what we do in a way we can't describe in words, all with the latest design. We're launching ourselves to the cutting edge of what websites look like these days."

In its seven years so far, Adventures on the Gorge has transformed the rough campground and river outing of the 1970s into an all-around 21st century getaway that competes with any vacation, conference, reunion, or celebration spot to be found. "Before, when it was just rafting companies, you would take 40 people rafting and 28 of the 40 would be really into it and the others really weren't—they were just going along," Roger says. "Now they can all have a great time. The 28 can go rafting, five or six can go zip-lining, others go mountain biking or hiking or lay by the pool. The variety is so important to the visitor experience. Instead of competing with other rafting companies, now we're competing with Colonial Williamsburg and Cedar Point and Disney World." Visiting guides recognize it, too. "Guides come in from the West and the South to work the Gauley dam releases in the fall and they're always so amazed at how much we have to offer beyond just rafting," he says. "I've heard so many comment, 'If their friends out West could just see this.'"

Hart and the resort's staff of nearly 700 love showing guests a good time. "We take people from all over the world and we get to wind them up like tops and send them home with so much energy and enthusiasm," he says. "It's really a lot of fun to do that."

Still Evolving

Adventures on the Gorge today is "an outfitter on mega-steroids," in Brian's words. "We're still showing people the beauty and magic of the New River Gorge, and we now do 30 different activities. But ultimately we still believe in that authentic, nature-based experience: Explore nature, overcome challenges with guides and guests working together, come back to the facility, and celebrate the success of those adventures. This facility fosters that well beyond the experience."

But the management team isn't stopping with that. "We've introduced an all-inclusive vacation product, Explore the Gorge," Brian says. "Tell us how many days, pick and choose rivers and other adventures, eat at any of the restaurants, and pay one price—a cruise line experience on land."

And Hart hinted in early 2015 at yet another new adventure as well as a coming addition to the property. "The vision of our company is 'Leading the world outdoors,' and we're really behind that as a vision for where we're trying to go," he says. "We want to be the best at what we do, and one could argue we are—but that's not good enough. We're all working to make our adventures and our facility better and better every day." **855.255.1230**, visitaotg.com

Gather around the fire with family and friend on the Mill Creek Campus.

ompetes in a kayak
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on the Upper Gauley
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LIVE LIKE

The New River Gorge is often characterized as charming. Majestic waterfalls tumble down cliff lines to raging rapids below. Curious wildlife lurk around former mining towns that have long since faded into the landscape. Even the people are a colorful crew sporting their tan lines as badges of honor. In recent months, those same people have provided the regional landscape with a new, subtle addition—purple bracelets. Seemingly ordinary, these awareness bracelets carry the simple mantra of "Boatin' for Brian." They represent the life of a person who, not unlike the breathtaking scenery of the region he called home, wasn't lacking charm.

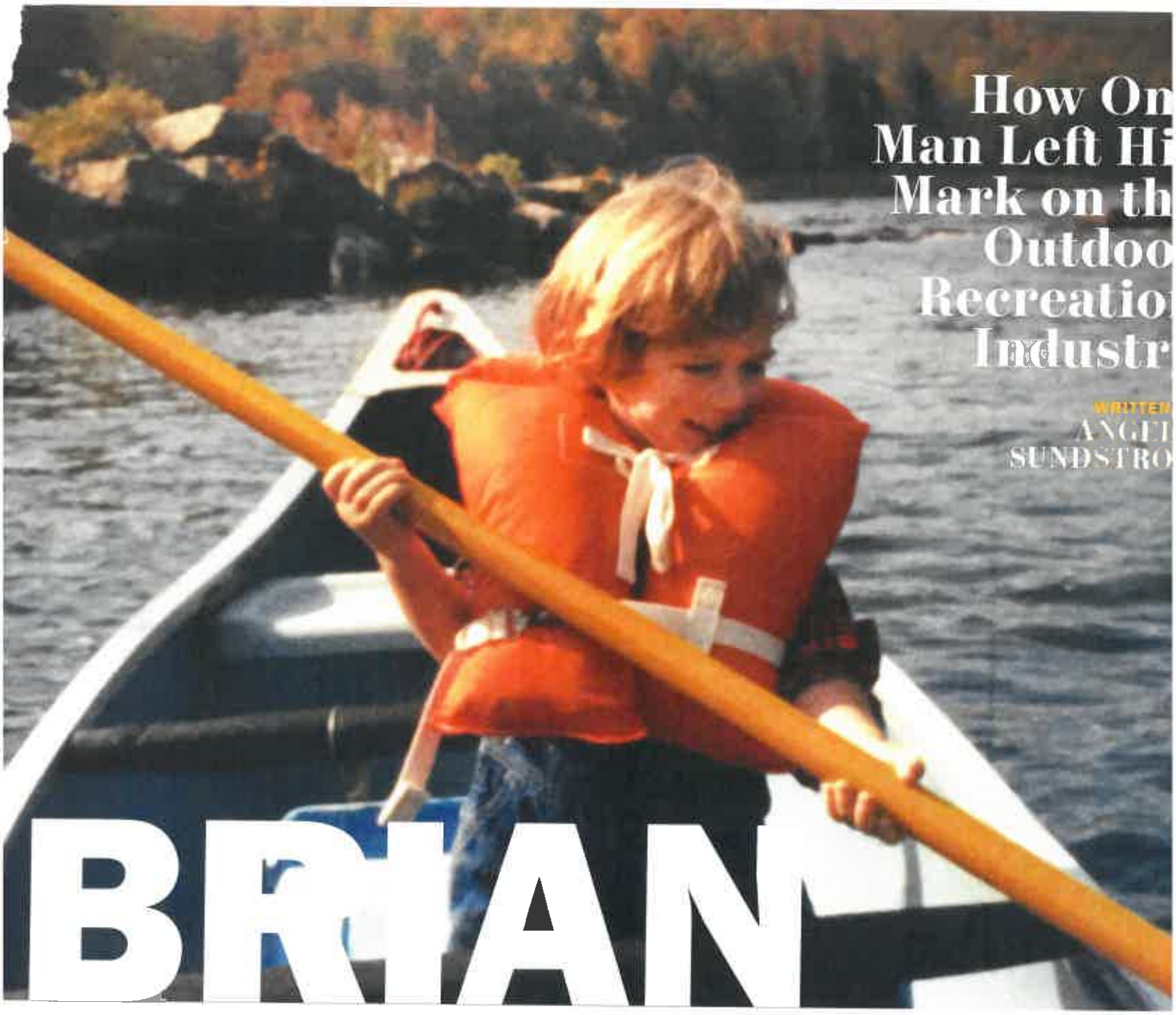
Brian Jennings, an avid kayaker and longtime raft guide, passed away on July 14, 2014, at the age of 35 from complications related to testicular cancer. His battle was short, only officially diagnosed weeks prior to his death. But those who knew Brian would tell you this tragedy is not his legacy. This was a man who devoted his life to outdoor recreation and who genuinely loved introducing new generations of adventurers to the concept of an active lifestyle. Cancer wasn't going to be the thing that defined him.

EARLY YEARS

A sense of adventure ran in Brian's bloodline. His parents, Alan and Barbara Jennings, are New Jersey natives and outdoor enthusiasts. "Our second date was a canoe trip," Barbara laughs. After their marriage, the two decided initially to raise their young family in the Garden State. Alan worked at both the Monmouth County Park System and Kittatinny Canoes, the company where his children were introduced to white water. "The kids just became river brats," he says. "They were with me all the time."

After several years of transition that included a brief excursion to the Appalachian Mountains when the children were young, Alan knew he was ready to return to the state that stole his heart years before. "I graduated from Davis & Elkins College. That's how I first fell in love with West Virginia." His friendship with West Virginia white water pioneer Jon Dragan played a strong role in his decision to pack up the family and permanently relocate to the New River Gorge in 1989.

Brian was familiar with the New River before moving to Fayette County full-time. Kittatinny Canoes made an annual staff trip for years,



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BRIAN

a trip that Alan was surprised he ever talked his bosses into. He recalls a time that illustrates Brian's confidence. "Brian was in his own duckie and he had gotten pretty good at it," Alan says. "We were getting ready to go through Surprise Rapid. I kept telling him, 'You gotta go left! Go left! Don't go through that wave.' All he said was, 'Yeah, yeah. OK, dad.' So Brian being Brian, he did what he wanted to do. We all got through and I look back and here is Brian coming directly through the wave. He disappeared. A few seconds later, his head pops up. We're all expecting him to be crying and freaking out. He just laughed like it's the greatest thing ever. I knew at that point he was hooked."

Kristin Jennings, Brian's sister, says that confidence always made her admire her older brother for his natural way of making her feel at ease. "Brian was adamant in letting me struggle, fail, celebrate success, and learn from mistakes," she says. "Whether it had to do with school, friendships, relationships, or life changes, he was great at teaching me to consider all perspectives, avenues, and options before jumping to conclusions. I still want to call him when I am stuck or confused, knowing that he'd know just what to say. I miss that a lot."

Those formative years spent growing up at white water rafting outfitters, whether in New Jersey, New York, or West Virginia, were a major influence. "Brian and I never knew any different," Kristin says. "Since I can remember we spent our childhood evenings, after school, weekends, and summers at the rafting companies. I think Brian and I thought for a while that this was just normal and that all kids got to hang out with adventurous—albeit somewhat crazy—people during their childhood. I think it helped my brother and me grow up a little differently. We were always good at talking with adults and communicating with others and I think that's because we were either hanging out with one another or hanging out with older people who talked to us like we were older, too."

Those who knew Brian say he was the inventor, the out-of-the-box thinker, the problem-solver. He was unabashedly himself. "I remember in fifth grade, he carried a briefcase to school instead of a

ABOVE A young Brian enjoys one of his first days on the water. "I vividly remember Brian riding on the back of my duckie," Alan says. "We'd go through white water and he just loved that."

LEFT: BEN EDISON; RIGHT: COURTESY OF ALAN JENNINGS

backpack," Kristin says. "It had a combination lock and was this light brown faux leather material. He looked so funny carrying that thing around, but he owned it. Everybody loved and appreciated him for being exactly who he was. I always really respected that."

AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

As many young adults do, Brian struggled with what to do after graduation from Fayetteville High School in 1997. He initially went to Marshall University in Huntington, chasing another longtime love: music. But Brian soon learned the adventure bug that bit him as a child wasn't going to be kept at bay. If anything the urge was growing stronger. He started working for his father on summer breaks, cooking riverside lunches for guests, which led to senior guides taking him under their wings. Few were surprised when Brian decided to quit college and pursue a job in the world he'd long loved—the white water rafting industry.

Brian finished his white water rafting training in 1999 and excelled so much he was granted the coveted honor of guiding the Upper Gauley River during his first season. That just doesn't happen—but Brian was an anomaly. Over the years he continued to improve not just his physical skills, but his showmanship as well. He took up skiing and ventured to resorts around the country in the winter. But he was first and foremost an ambassador for West Virginia. Brian wanted his guests and employees to love the region as much as he did, so he went above and beyond to get them there and convince them to stay.

BELOW Brian guides a crew from Adventures on the Gorge through Lower Keeney Rapid on the New River in 2014. "He was the ultimate showman because he truly enjoyed what he did and continued to push himself to be a better ambassador of what he loved," Ike says.

Ike Mootz, a river manager at Adventures on the Gorge and close friend, remembers how Brian took a chance on him before they even met face-to-face. "When I first moved to Fayetteville, I needed a place to live," Ike says. "He was in Virginia for the winter, had a room for rent in his house, and sight unseen allowed me to move in. I didn't even meet him until I had lived there for a month-plus."

Though Ike was most recently Brian's boss, this dynamic changed frequently as the two young guides weren't afraid of responsibility, nor were they afraid of good-natured fun. "Some of my favorite memories are every morning at guide call listening to him sarcastically cut people to ribbons," Ike says. "Sometimes I was a teammate, sometimes I was a victim, but it was always fun. He didn't have to be crude to get laughs. Just well-delivered direction and sometimes a little lighthearted ribbing did the trick."

Kayaking also became a huge part of Brian's life. He was even a member of the USA Freestyle Kayak Team, competed in Switzerland for the 2009 world championship, and was sponsored by well-known brands like Pyranha, Wavesport, Kokatat, and Smith Optics. "Brian could have gone anywhere else in the world and made a life for himself, but he kept coming back to the New River Gorge," Ike says.

PJ Stevenson, a senior manager at Adventures on the Gorge, knew Brian for years as a friend before becoming co-workers. "We both lived that transient lifestyle, just in different places," she says.

Brian was never the type of person to shy away from a challenge, which often left him as the go-to guy for odd jobs. "One of the most dependable people in my life," PJ says. "If I needed someone to take special guests down the river, he was there. If we needed models for a photo shoot, he was there. If I needed a cocktail after a long day, he would know without asking and was there—drink in hand."

Encouraging visitors to push themselves was a hallmark of Brian's guiding career. "He'd want folks to know they were the only thing standing in their way between watching the show or being the show. Anyone can learn anything as long as they have an interest and are humble enough to fail a few times."

BECOMING A MENTOR

Passing knowledge along to the next generation, or even generations before him, was what Brian enjoyed most. He was often described as a natural coach and teacher. Jo Beth Stamm was one of his converts. After meeting at Massanutten Resort in Virginia one winter, Brian began singing the praises of his home. "We became friends quickly, and by February he was trying to convince me to move to Fayetteville for raft guide training," Jo Beth says. "I told him white water rafting was for crazy people, but he kept at it. Ten years later, here I still am. His love for the river and this area was genuine and infectious."

Training new raft guides is not for those thin on patience. Brian, however, thrived on it. In 2014 he was the primary trainer and in charge of 20 guide candidates. "He had this way of knowing just how someone needed to learn," Jo Beth says. "He tailored his instruction of whatever he was

WHITEWATER PHOTOGRAPHY

ABOVE "He had a real genuine love of this area," Alan says. "He wanted to make everyone aware of everything this area could be to people." Brian participated in the 2012 Video Boater's Challenge in Fayetteville.

teaching—skiing, kayaking, raft guiding—to his students, and he always celebrated their successes enthusiastically."

No one may understand this quite like Hannah Vogt, Brian's girlfriend, who completed her first year as a raft guide last season. "Brian and I met while I was a leader for the Adventure West Virginia program at West Virginia University," Hannah says. "He frequently was one of the guides on our rafting trips."

Brian made sure to pass his outdoor recreation knowledge on to his significant other. "Not only was he passionate about the sports he participated in, but he truly excelled in all of them and wanted nothing more than to teach the people around him how to be good at things," Hannah says. "That alone is testament enough to how strong our relationship was. He taught me how to ski. He taught me and 20 other people how to raft guide. There was never an 'off' button. He never made people feel embarrassed for asking questions."

Though the next training class will not have Brian as its leader, his lessons live on in those he taught before. "Always strive for greatness," Hannah says. "If you want to be good at something and you want others to notice, go above and beyond what is asked of you. Do what makes you happy and nothing less. And please have your trips take matching paddles. The photos will look better."

LEGACY

Recently a guest from one of Brian's final rafting trips learned of his passing and sent a 33-minute video to his father. For many, it was a welcome visit from an old friend, but it's the first words uttered that reveal his true gift to us all. "Alrighty guys, so the big theme of the day is teamwork," Brian says in the short film. "It doesn't necessarily matter how hard we paddle, but if we aren't paddling together, then we will all swim together." A man is nothing without his team. Brian Jennings believed that. His team embraced him in life and celebrates him after death. We should all be so lucky.

TOM RILEY, VIDEO BOATER'S CHALLENGE ARCHIVES

LIFE-CHANGING ADVENTURES FOR YOUNG ADULTS IMPACTED BY CANCER

"I JUST CAME BACK FROM THE ABSOLUTE BEST WEEK OF MY LIFE"
-PARTICIPANT, 2014

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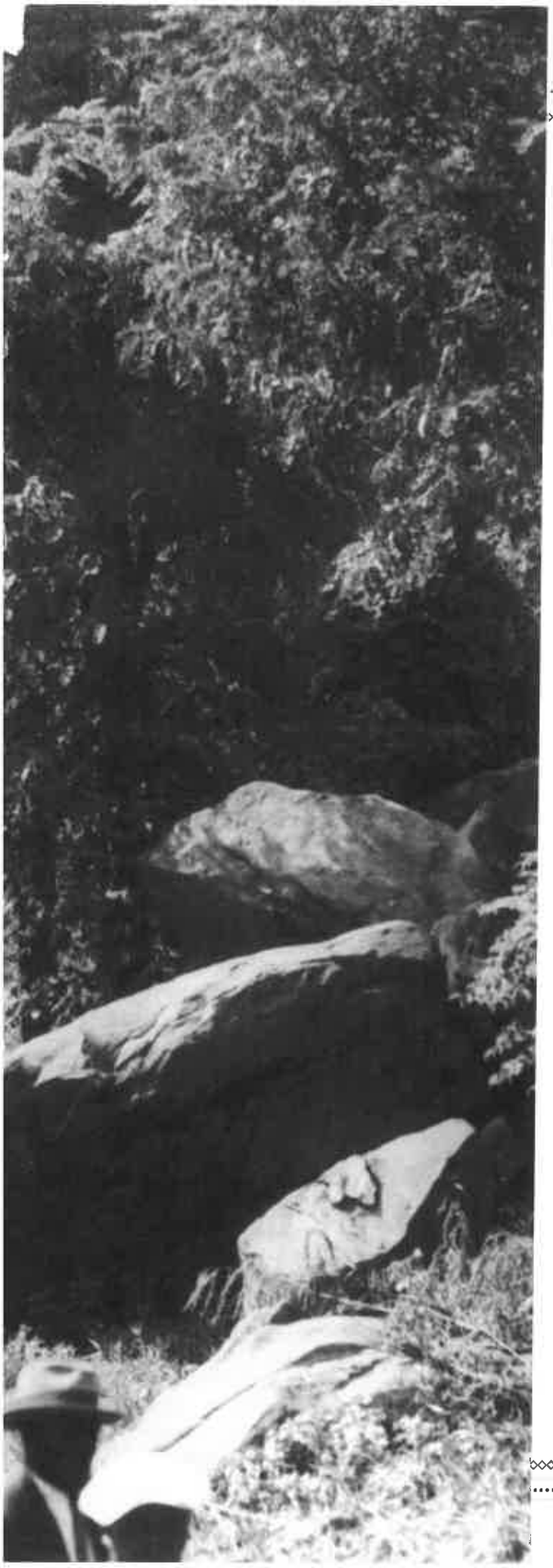


A local historian shares some of the New River Gorge's tall tales.

LEGENDS *of the* GORGE

written by
ZACK HAROLD

photos courtesy of
GEORGE BRAGG

IT SEEMS THE NEW RIVER GORGE HAS ALWAYS ATTRACTED a wild bunch. Rafters, rock climbers, and mountain bikers certainly know how to have a good time. But this friendly, live-and-let-live crowd can't hold a candle to the gorge's original hell-raisers.

Around the turn of the 20th century, coal mines began opening all along the New River. "When you think of the New River Gorge, you have to think of the gold strike in San Francisco," says local historian George Bragg. "Everybody wanted to come down here to get a job." Before long there were more than 80 small mining towns along the river. And if you've ever watched an old Western movie, it's not difficult to guess what happened next. "When you get a little town going, the first thing that pops up is a saloon," George says.

Men worked hard in the mines—these were the days when miners still dug and loaded coal by hand—so they began looking for ways to occupy their time above-ground. While most towns had their own watering holes, anyone looking for a really good time only had to take the train to Thurmond and cross the walking bridge across Dunloup Creek to Southside. Thomas McKell opened a luxury hotel in Southside called The Dunglen, a place for high rollers looking for quality liquor and high-stakes gambling. But the swanky hotel didn't appeal to the working men, who were only making about $2 a day in the mines. So other businesses began springing up in Southside, taking advantage of the town's freewheeling liquor laws.

As George details in *Window to the Past*—an anthology of local legends he wrote with his wife, Melody—the region of the early 1900s was soon dotted with all kinds of saloons, gambling parlors, brothels, and dance halls. "If you wanted to have a crazy ol' time, all you had to do was cross the bridge," he says. "Believe me, they had everything." It wasn't all good times, however. George says nearly every edition of the local newspapers contained reports of people drowning or being hit by trains—curiously, most of the victims were found with empty pockets. The growing crime rates didn't sit well with Captain William Thurmond, a devout Baptist teetotaler who ran the town that bore his name. There wasn't much he could do to change the wild living going on in Southside, however, so Captain Thurmond decided he needed a way to protect his citizens from the lawlessness across Dunloup Creek. And he knew the perfect man for the job: Harrison Ash.

BELOW Both a lawman and saloonkeeper, Harrison Ash was Thurmond's fearless police chief, chasing down outlaws on the rough mountainous terrain of the New River Gorge.

Standing 6 feet 4 inches tall and weighing 275 pounds, Ash looked like a super-sized version of Kurt Russell's Wyatt Earp from the movie *Tombstone*. A portrait of the lawman shows a steely-eyed gaze, a long handlebar mustache, and a broad, imposing frame. There are no accounts of Ash's arrival in the gorge, but local legend says he came to the area as a detective with the C&O Railroad, where he earned a reputation as a highly effective lawman who could easily hunt down convicts in the rough mountainous terrain.

After Thurmond hired Ash as his town's chief of police, he began wearing a wide-brimmed Stetson hat emblazoned with the word "chief" and a pistol marked with seven notches—one for each of the men he had killed, although George says Ash would later confess to killing at least twice as many.

Window to the Past details some of Ash's more unconventional policing techniques. Former C&O conductor Billy Mills told George he once saw Ash chasing a man on the railroad tracks. Apparently tired of the foot race, Ash stopped, drew his weapon, and fired. The alleged criminal fell face-first into the tracks. When the lawman eventually spotted Mills and a friend watching the episode, he said, "Well, boys, I'll be danged if I don't believe I stumped my toe and shot that feller."

Ash was able to keep a close eye on local ruffians because he also owned a saloon in Southside. He was a regular player at local poker tables, too. While his methods were less than conventional, George says Ash became known for his ability to always get his man. The small-town police chief would get calls from all over the state, asking him to help find outlaws. "He was known as 'the Manhunter,'" George says. "He was described by the *Cincinnati Enquirer* as the most fearless law enforcement officer in West Virginia."

In researching his book, George came across a first-hand account of Ash from former West Virginia Attorney General Howard B. Lee. Fresh out of college and looking for a job as a school principal, Lee visited Thurmond in 1905. As soon as he arrived in town, he headed for dinner at The Dunglen. It wasn't long before he encountered Ash. The lawman told Lee all about the crime in the area and left him with these parting words: "Son, you are a likely looking young man, trying to get a start in the world, and my advice to you is stay away from this hellhole," Lee recalled. Lee returned to Huntington the next morning.

Ash would remain Thurmond's police chief for less than a decade. He eventually moved downriver to Deep Water, where he was shot by his wife. George says Ash survived the shooting, but died a short time later of "mental illness"—probably suicide, although the actual cause of death remains unclear.

The Miser *of* Nuttallburg

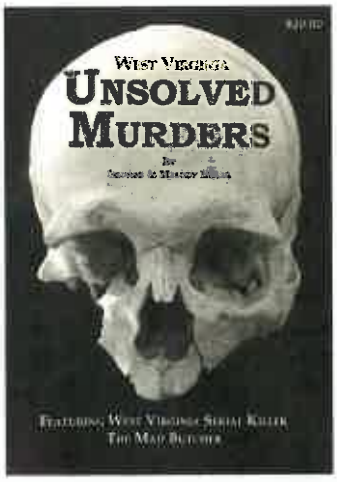
The gorge is filled with plenty more tales of mystery and intrigue. One of George's favorites happened in the town of Nuttallburg, a community named for the English-born mine owner John Nuttall and his family. Another Englishman, Dr. William Holland, took up residence in the town to seek his fortune in the coal mines. He succeeded and built his family a substantial home in Nuttallburg. According to legend, Holland suffered a severe heart attack in 1918. As he lay dying, the doctor tried to give his family a message but was unable to speak.

It would soon become clear what Holland was trying to convey. His children sold the home after their father's death. While preparing the property for its new owners, a gardener discovered two half-gallon jugs buried in a flowerbed. One jug was filled with British sovereigns and American gold coins. The other was crammed with $50 bills.

George says the gardener took his findings and left Fayette County—but not before telling some of his friends about the hidden treasure. Not long afterward, a plumber working inside the house found a metal box filled with $20,000 in gold coins. Another worker is rumored to have found another box worth $20,000. "This guy grabs that toolbox and splits the country," George says.

The discoveries continued. Someone found nearly $500 worth of gold hidden in an old greenhouse, and a group of carpenters discovered several glass jars hidden in a cellar filled with bank notes and gold coins worth $21,000—which the workmen quietly divided among

ABOVE Dr. William Holland built this home in Nuttallburg after making his fortune in the coal mines. He buried a large portion of that fortune around his home, which was discovered by treasure hunters after his death.



GEORGE & MELODY BRAGG have published three books of New River Gorge history. *Window to the Past* details legends of the area, including the "ghost towns" of the gorge and some prominent mining disasters. *West Virginia Unsolved Murders* features several true crime stories, including details of George's four-year investigation of serial killer the Mad Butcher. *Coal Mining: Mayhem and Murder* is a collection of news stories from 1900 to 1912. For more information, call 304.256.8400 or email gemphotos@suddenlink.net.

themselves. George admits the story sounds too fantastic to be true, but he has paperwork to prove it. "The records are in the courthouse," he says. That's because Holland's heirs somehow learned of these hidden treasures and sued to have their father's money returned. The lawsuit was unsuccessful, however—the courts ruled the home's new owner, Stover Coal Company Superintendent William Nicholson, had rights to the property and everything on it.

George says the Nicholsons searched every square inch of the property in the coming years, but it's not known if they found more buried treasure. The Holland house is no longer there—it's been reduced to ruins, just like the rest of Nuttallburg. But before you go looking for any remaining pieces of Holland's stash, consider this: The town and mining complex became part of the New River Gorge National River in 1998, so it's all federal property now.

The Mystery Walls *of* Armstrong Mountain

Another of George's favorite local legends predates the arrival of white settlers in the region. In the 1870s amateur archaeologist Captain William Page took an interest in some large stone walls that snaked around the top of Armstrong Mountain, about 300 feet from the summit. He found the structure was about 10 miles long, built from stone that was not cut in any way, and put together without the use of mortar. A natural spring supplied water to the structure and piles of stone seemed to indicate some kind of tower once stood inside the walls. And if that wasn't strange enough, the stones did not match the geology of the rest of the area—which means they were carried up the steep mountainside from elsewhere.

Located along the Kanawha River at Deep Water, the site has continued to puzzle researchers since Page's initial inspection. "Nobody was ever able to figure out why it was built," George says. Some believed the structure might have been used for military purposes, while others suspected it was a religious site, like an Appalachian version of Stonehenge. No one has ever been able to definitely determine who built the walls, either. "That's part of the mystery," George says. Early researchers believed the structures predated Native Americans and were built by some prehistoric race that once occupied the gorge. Others traced the walls' history to about 300 A.D.

The mystery walls of Armstrong Mountain are now nothing but rubble. According to a 1970 story in *The Charleston Gazette*, parts of the walls were destroyed in the mid-1960s by strip-mining. Although he's never been to the site himself, George says he's heard all that remains of the structures are some piles of stone. It seems the mystery walls will remain a mystery.

John Henry

Probably the most famous New River Gorge legend is that of John Henry. Thanks to tall tales and popular songs, the "steel-driving man" has grown nearly as large as Paul Bunyan in the American imagination. But George says there is more than one version to this story.

Here's the popular version of the tale: John Henry was an African-American steel driver, working to install tracks for the C&O Railroad through the gorge. Henry's impressive size, strength, and speed earned him a reputation among his bosses as the best steel driver on the C&O line. But then came the steam drill. This new, high-tech machine was supposed to drill holes faster than any normal man could manage. John Henry's bosses did not believe the claim, however, and made a bet their champion steel driver could beat the machine. Henry proved his bosses correct and beat the steam drill—only to die from exhaustion.

George's research has found a second, less popular version of the tale, however. He uncovered it in a letter from former West Virginia Governor William Alexander MacCorkle to the editor of a folk song compilation. In MacCorkle's version, the steel driver's name was actually John Hardy. And Hardy did not meet his end on the railroad tracks—he was hanged for murder. In this telling, Hardy was good at his job but also had a penchant for drinking and gambling. One night Hardy loses his shirt in a card game, leaves a gambling parlor in a drunken stupor, and stumbles by the local jailhouse where he confesses to the murder of two Shawnee men.

George acknowledges it's impossible at this point to separate fact from fiction, or John Henry from John Hardy, in this story. But that's not important. The tale of John Henry has become a world-famous parable of man's struggle with machines. And that tale, true or not, has its roots in the New River Gorge.

WRITTEN BY
Zack Harold

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
Elizabeth Roth

Great Escape

The Fayetteville area is the perfect place to disappear into good food, good times, and local culture.

BERNIE KANIA MOVED TO FAYETTEVILLE looking for something different. Although he was raised in nearby Oak Hill, in 2008 he was living in Virginia Beach. He was a civil engineer by training but was working in the loss control division of an insurance company. The company began making cuts as the Great Recession threw the U.S. economy into a tailspin, and Bernie knew his time was coming. "I knew sooner or later I was going to get the call that said, 'Hey Bernie, we want you to move to Omaha,'" he says. His marriage also was coming to an end, and his youngest son was headed off to college. It seemed like an opportunity to make a big change in his life.

Then he heard the **Morris Harvey House Bed and Breakfast** was up for sale. The home was once owned by—you guessed it—Morris Harvey, a prominent local businessman, Fayette County sheriff, and Confederate soldier. It became a bed-and-breakfast in 1994 when Elizabeth Bush and her husband, George Soros, opened it to the public. Bernie is distantly related to Elizabeth—her daughter married one of his cousins—so when he heard through the family grapevine she was interested in retiring, he jumped at the chance. "I figured if there's a time to make a decision like this, this is it," he says. So, with visions of *Newhart* dancing through his head, Bernie escaped city life to become the Morris Harvey House's newest owner and innkeeper.

Fayetteville and its surrounding towns are a great place to plan an escape—permanent or temporary—and Bernie now helps facilitate escapes for his guests. "We try to offer them a one-stop-shop," he says. If guests want to raft or zip line, he books their trips. If they're looking for a good place to eat, he hands them a map and points out all the locally owned

restaurants. "We have so many unique restaurants and they're all so good. You wouldn't think a little town of 3,000 people would have the diversity of food we have. I'd put our restaurants up against Charleston or Morgantown, any of big cities in the state," Bernie says.

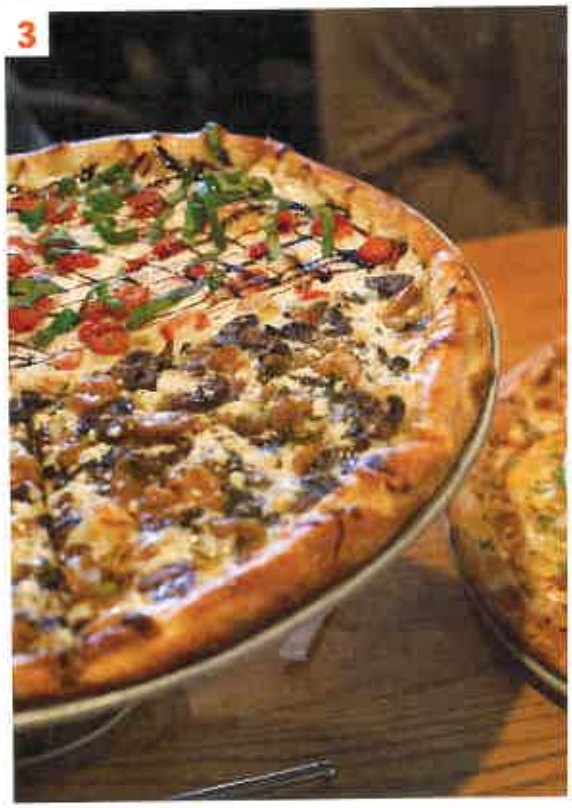
Good Eats

Pies & Pints (3) is probably Fayetteville's best known restaurant. Co-founders Kim Shingledecker and David Bailey opened the restaurant in June 2003, serving up gourmet hand-tossed pizzas alongside craft beer. As the restaurant grew in popularity, Pies & Pints opened six additional locations throughout West Virginia, Ohio, and Kentucky. While each of those new locations maintains Pies & Pints' original commitment to fresh ingredients, creative dishes and great beer, there's still something special about visiting the pizza joint where it all began. "I love that building," David says. "That building really is an incubator."

In some ways, you can use Pies & Pints to trace the history of Fayetteville's culinary scene. In 2010, as Kim and David were planning to open a second Pies location in Charleston, he began thinking about another restaurant venture. His wife, Tashia, was a river rafting guide and also worked as a server at Pies. "She wanted to get out of rafting and we wanted to own our own restaurant," he says. David already owned a prime restaurant space near U.S. Route 19, so the couple decided to open an East Coast-style deli, with cold cuts, potato salad, and a small beer selection. Inspired by the modern-day speakeasies they saw opening in big cities, they dubbed the establishment the **Secret Sandwich Society.**

It has since become Fayetteville's worst kept

3



1

2

4

CLOCKWISE Court Street is home to Gumbo's and more. Save room for Country Thai in Lansing. Pies & Pints has pizza for everyone.

secret. David and Tashia expanded the shop to a full-blown restaurant after one season, and the Secret Sandwich Society has since gained a reputation for its creative take on casual lunch and dinner fare. The sandwiches are named for former U.S. Presidents. History nerds should look for subtle jokes on the menu. For instance, the sandwich dedicated to President Herbert Hoover—who once promised a "chicken in every pot"—is a fried chicken cutlet, topped with honey butter, pickles and greens. The "Kennedy" contains roasted pork loin, ham, pickles, Swiss cheese, roasted garlic mayo, and mustard. At any other restaurant, the dish would probably be called a "Cuban sandwich."

In addition to deli sandwiches, the restaurant also serves burgers. Those are named for Secret Service code names: Velvet, Dynamo, Rawhide, Renegade, Eagle, and so on. There are also several salads on the menu, named for former First Ladies: Martha, Eleanor, Lucy, and Dolley.

Trace another branch of Pies & Pints' family tree, and you'll find out Kim also opened another of Fayetteville's most beloved institutions, **Cathedral Café (1)**. Three years after opening the restaurant in 1997, Kim wanted to sell out. She asked one of her employees—current owner Wendy Bayes—to purchase the business. The Cathedral Café was a seasonal establishment at the time, closing up shop for the winter once Gauley season was over, but Wendy turned the restaurant into a year-round business.

As you might guess from the name—as well as the high ceilings and huge stained-glass windows—the building was once a Methodist church. It's now a relaxed meeting place frequented by outdoorsy folk, businesspeople, locals, and tourists alike who come to enjoy a large selection of coffee drinks, soups, sandwiches, salads, desserts, and daily specials.

If you're not in the mood for American casual food, Fayetteville and the surrounding area also have a good selection of specialty cuisines. Cajun restaurant **Gumbo's (2)** is a local favorite, along with **Diogi's Mexican Grill.** Or you could make the short drive to Lansing for **Country Thai (4)**, where Bill Reilly and his wife, Ging, originally from Thailand, cook up great eats. The cafeteria-style restaurant uses fresh ingredients to make authentic Thai dishes like chicken curry, pad thai, tom yum soup, and ginger pork. For the full experience, order a Thai tea with your meal. It's an iced drink made with Ceylon tea, sugar, and condensed milk.

Stretch Out

The best thing about eating in Fayetteville is calories don't count. If you eat too much, just head to the closest hiking or biking trail or take a quick paddle down the river.

When it's time to gear up, mountain bikers can head to **Marathon Bicycle Company (3)**. The store rents and sells bikes and can also service your ride to get it ready for the trail. "We try to be a hub for the cycling community," says owner Adam Stephens.

Adam wants to make it as easy as possible for newcomers to break into the sport. That begins with making sure riders have the correct bikes for their size and the type of riding they plan to do. "That instills confidence," he says. "A lot of people don't realize there are so many technologies within cycling. We believe the more you're educated on the product you're going to buy, that's going to give you more confidence."

Rock climbers, hikers, campers, and other outdoor enthusiasts should head to **Water Stone Outdoors (2)**. This outfitter has served the New River Gorge area since 1994 and offers shoes, clothes, guidebooks, climbing gear, camping gear, and just about anything else you need to explore the outdoors. And unlike big-box stores, the employees at Water Stone know what they're talking about and are happy to help find what you need.

If you're searching for a more low-impact activity, check out **Kula Yoga Studio**. The studio derives its name from the Sanskrit word for "community" and is open to everyone. Visitors looking for a primer in West Virginia's coal history should visit **Whipple Company Store (1)** in nearby Scarbro. "I always tell people this is not a place you want to go to when you're on a schedule," says Bernie at the Morris Harvey House. "There's so much to see, you get caught up in it. It's a hard place to get out of."

The store was once an honest-to-goodness company store, the center of coal camp life. It's open for tours now. Bernie says children especially enjoy the "kids in the coal mine" tour, which begins in the basement coal bin. "They go down there and actually dig a little bit of coal. They bring their bucket in, they get paid in scrip, and they can go in the gift shop and buy something."

Just outside of town, art lovers must see **Studio B Gallery and Gifts**, which features local and import art ranging from pottery and photos to jewelry and stained glass.

1

2

3

NIKKI BOWMAN; ANGELA SUNDSTROM (2)

Chicago
Detroit
Philadelphia
Washington Dulles
Washington Reagan
Charlotte
Atlanta
Myrtle Beach
Dallas / Fort Worth
Houston
flyCRW
Your Gateway to West Virginia
•Over 40 daily flights to & from 10 major airports
•Service from American, Delta, United, US Airways, and Spirit
•Just one hours drive from skiing, world-class whitewater rafting, and all of the outdoor adventure West Virginia has to offer
YEAGER AIRPORT
West Virginia's Gateway
Hip, Historic, Almost Heaven... Charleston, WV

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TRY SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY!
GET SOME!
Rave reviews by: COOKING &
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Charleston
222 Capitol Street
304.342.7437
Morgantown
1002 Suncrest Towne Centre
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Lafayette Flats in the heart of downtown Fayetteville offers a contemporary place to rest your head with four fully furnished apartments.

1

The Barn Loft is not your average overnight stay. Climb a ladder up into the 100-year-old barn to find chic accommodations.

Sleep It Off

After a long day eating and playing in the New River Gorge, the only thing left is a good night's sleep. Fayetteville and the surrounding area have plenty of options there, too. The recently opened **Lafayette Flats (1)** offers four modern fully furnished apartments in a former bank located just across from the Fayette County Courthouse. Owners Shawn Means and Amy McLaughlin have carefully restored the top two floors of the three-story Malcolm Building, showcasing the space's large windows that look onto the courthouse lawn.

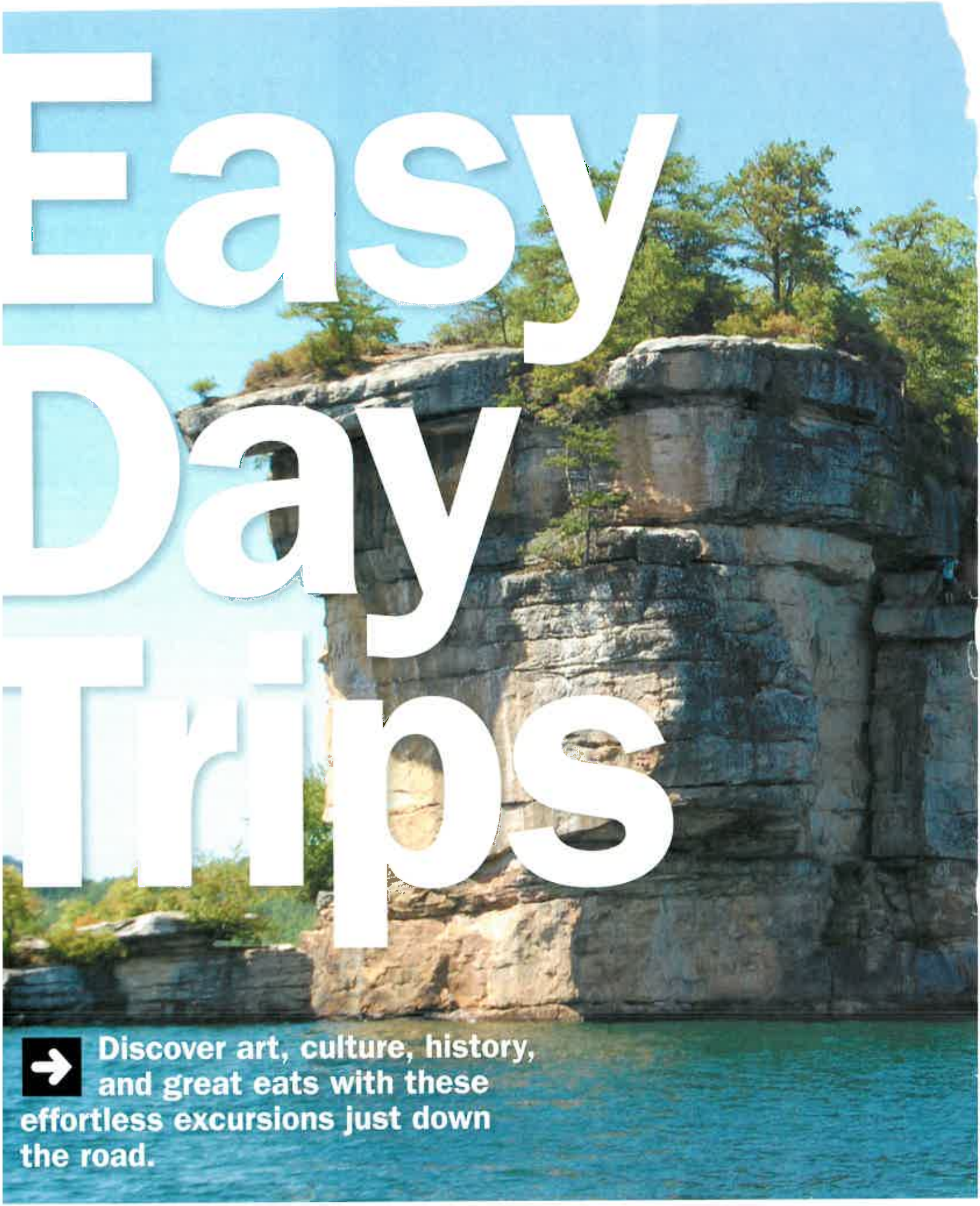
A short walk away, the Morris Harvey House Bed and Breakfast offers five guest areas, elegantly furnished with oriental rugs, antiques, and a few claw-foot bathtubs. The house was built in 1902 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Rosa Suite and the Grand Suite have private baths, while the library and Harvey Room share a bathroom on the second floor. The third floor is a family suite, with two bedrooms, a living area, and a private bath. Bernie says the space can comfortably sleep five people without rollaway beds and is very popular with families.

If you're looking for something a little more rugged but don't want to spend your stay in a tent, consider spending the night in **The Barn Loft (2)**. This is not some clever play on words. Holly Clark began renting out the hayloft in her 100-year-old barn in July 2011, about a year after she moved on to the property. She originally fixed up the space for some rock climbing friends, but then read about the online space-sharing service Airbnb and decided her loft would be a good way to bring in some extra dough. She has since booked 176 reservations then, and the number grows each year.

The Barn Loft is decorated like a grown-up tree house, with shabby chic furniture, string lights, and a queen bed draped with mosquito nets. Holly acknowledges the accommodations might not be for everyone—"There's no heat. There's no insulation. You climb up a ladder to get into the barn loft," she says—but that hasn't deterred her guests. "I've had folks from all over the world."

That includes a man who flew from Afghanistan to connect with an American woman he'd only met once before. "He flew to the States and they drove from Washington, D.C., to stay in the barn. It was their first date," she says. Anywhere else, flying across the world to spend the night in a barn with a stranger might sound a little crazy. But in a town of escape artists like Fayetteville—well, it's just one more adventure.

Easy Day Trips



Discover art, culture, history, and great eats with these effortless excursions just down the road.

Beckley & Beyond

Just 30 minutes from Fayetteville, Beckley is a diverse mix of industry, arts, and culture set in the midst of West Virginia's coalfields. The heart of Raleigh County had more than 17,000 residents within its borders at the time of the 2010 U.S. Census, and people living there know—there's plenty to do in this neck of the woods. Take a short drive into this West Virginia town for everything from one-of-a-kind shopping to a plethora of history. There's a shopping mall, hospital, and other major amenities in Beckley, too.

Perhaps the most iconic symbol of Beckley is **Tamarack,** (*One Tamarack Park, tamarackwv.com*). Block out plenty of time to meander through this red-peaked building, as it is home to the state's very best arts and crafts with thousands upon thousands of paintings, photographs, sculptures, quilts, baskets, and so much more. Tamarack also houses a beloved food court with meals prepared daily by chefs trained at The Greenbrier.

At Beckley's **Exhibition Coal Mine** (*513 Ewart Avenue, beckley.org/exhibition_coal_mine*) visitors can immerse themselves in Appalachian history in a way that isn't possible anywhere else. The sprawling exhibition is on the site of a former family-owned mine—its heyday in the early 20th century. Take a guided tour through the mine as well as the re-created coal company town, complete with homes, church, and a schoolhouse. The adjoining **Youth Museum of Southern West Virginia** (*509 Ewart Avenue, beckley.org/youth_museum*) is a must-see for all ages, with a planetarium and a reproduction of an Appalachian homestead.

For theater, art, and music, the **Raleigh Playhouse & Theatre** (*403 Neville Street, theraleighwv.com*) in town is an intimate venue with a wonderfully eclectic calendar. There you can catch live blues, see *Guys and Dolls*, or even take in a film. Just a mile-and-a-half from the center of Beckley, **Theatre West Virginia** (*102 Spruce Street, Mabscott, theatrewestvirginia.com*) is another great choice for live productions as this group brings theater to life with vibrant outdoor productions like the *Hatfields and McCoys* at the amphitheater at Grandview.

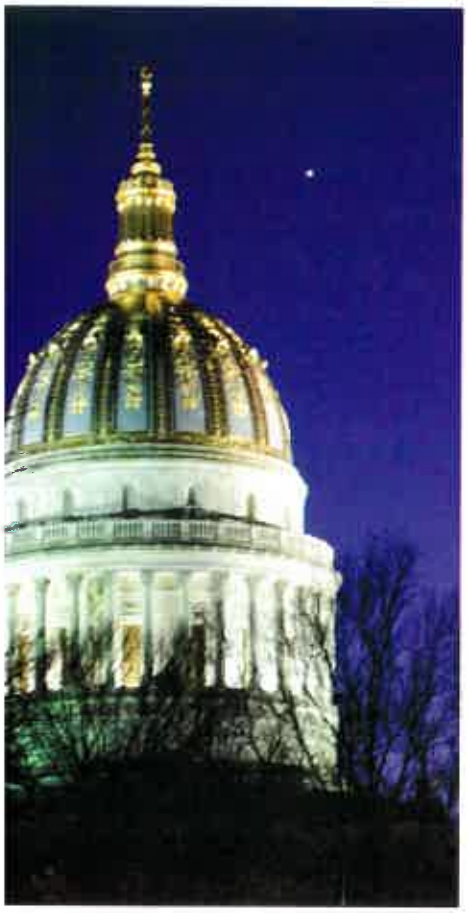
Looking for a quick bite to eat that you're not soon to forget? The service at **King Tut Drive-In** (*301 North Eisenhower Drive, 304.252.6353*) is fit for a pharaoh. Customers rave about the extensive menu, particularly the milkshakes and cream pies. The Beckley staple opened in the 1940s, and bestsellers include the twice-baked potato, English hot dogs, and homemade pies.

If you're looking to sit and stay awhile, try **Padrino's Ristorante Italiano** (*135 Beckley Crossing, 304.256.2001*). Don't let its location in a strip mall fool you. Padrino's serves up delicious, authentic Italian fare, from spaghetti and shrimp scampi to pizza and calzones. For a unique dessert during warmer months, travel just down the road for old-fashioned custard from **Berkshire's Custard** (*1344 North Eisenhower Drive*). Berkshire's is also known for its great hot dogs and fun tunes—music from the 1950s and '60s plays in the background. The folks at Custard's cut no corners, either. The scrumptious waffle cones are hand-rolled and made fresh daily.

Tamarack hosts the state's best artists and more from this iconic building. The Exhibition Coal Mine and Youth Museum are also popular stops in Beckley. Have a treat at Berkshire's Custard in the spring or summer months.

Just a wee bit off the beaten path but worth your time, you might also unwind with a tour from **Daniel Vineyards** (*200 Twin Oaks G, Crab Orchard, danielvineyards.com*), just minutes from Beckley. Established in 1990, this family-owned winery is known for its sweet, fruity wines and velvety port and is situated on nearly 200 beautiful acres.

CLOCKWISE: CARLA WITT FORD (4); NIKKI BOWMAN



Charleston

Just over an hour from the New River Gorge, at the intersection of the state's three major interstates, and home of the **Yeager Airport**, the state's capital offers up something for everyone. You can explore the **West Virginia Capitol Building** (*1900 Kanawha Boulevard East*) for free every day. The remarkable piece of architecture and history sits just steps from the Kanawha River, making a stately impression with its 293-foot dome covered in 23.5-karat gold.

While there, make time to visit the **Culture Center** on the grounds of the Capitol Complex. Opened in 1976, it's home for the state's cultural, artistic, and historical treasures. The **West Virginia State Museum** on the bottom floor is open daily for free tours. Visitors can also browse the state library archives or check out the art and history exhibits in the lobby and balcony.

When you're ready to explore some more, the **Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences** (*1 Clay Square, theclaycenter.org*) has you covered. This 240,000-square-foot venue houses visual and performing arts and sciences and is also the home of the **West Virginia Symphony Orchestra** (*wvsymphony.org*) as well as the **Avampato Discovery Museum**, which has works of 18th, 19th, and 20th century art and two floors of hands-on science exhibits. If you really want to get out and explore, though, check out **Energy Rock Gym** (*269 Graham Drive, energyrockgym.com*) for indoor bouldering and climbing.

Looking for a show or special event? Check out the **Charleston Civic Center** (*200 Civic Center Drive, charlestonwvciviccenter.com*) calendar so you don't miss the area's biggest events, from the hottest musicians to the biggest sporting events. Speaking of sports, you can also enjoy America's favorite pastime from Appalachian Power Park in the heart of the city with a **West Virginia Power** (*601 Morris Street, wvpower.com*) baseball game, April through September. The team is Pittsburgh Pirates' single-A farm team.

All of this running around will sure to have your stomach growling. Fortunately, West Virginia's largest city also has all of the food options you could ask for. Vegetarian? You'll find plenty of choices at the farm-to-table **Bluegrass Kitchen** (*1600 Washington Street East, bluegrasswv.com*), and you'll love the new **Mission Savvy** (*202 Hale Street, missionsavvy.com*) café with its all-organic, vegan goodies and cold-pressed juices. Looking for something a little different? The menu at **Noah's Eclectic Bistro** (*110 McFarland Street, noahseclectic.com*) always has something new with its wide-ranging world fusion. Just make a reservation as the intimate restaurant fills up quickly.

For something casual but delicious, everyone loves **Black Sheep Burrito and Brews** (*709 Quarrier Street, blacksheepwv.com*). After dinner, continue to treat yourself by walking on over to **Ellen's Homemade Ice Cream** (*225 Capitol*

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: NIKKI BOWMAN; ELIZABETH ROTH; NIKKI BOWMAN (3)

The capitol's gold dome gleams at night. Moxxee Coffee sells handcrafted coffee, biscotti, and more. Spend a day at The Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences, or discover great arts and crafts at the East End Bazaar on Saturdays from May through October.

Street, ellensicecream.com). Any lover of the New River Gorge will also love **Swiftwater Café** (*405 Capitol Street #105, swifwatercafe.com*), both for its delicious breakfast and lunch and for the owners' West Virginia white water enthusiasm. And don't forget to get caffeinated at **Moxxee Coffee** (*301 Morris Street, moxxeecoffee.com*), where you can enjoy a handcrafted beverage in a modern coffee shop.

For food and shopping all in one place, you can't miss **Capitol Market** (*capitolmarket.net*). There you'll find ample opportunity to buy everything from souvenirs to houseplants as well as stops like **Johnnie's Fresh Meat Market** and **The Purple Onion,** a fresh produce mecca where you can fill up over a lunch of homemade soup or a healthy salad.

Shop until you drop at favorites like the **Bridge Road Shops** (*bridgeroad.org*). This collection of upscale stores in South Hills has everything you need, from the finest shoes at **Yarid's** (*1005 Bridge Road, yarids.com*) to gifts for all your loved ones from **Cornucopia** (*912 Bridge Road*) or **Eggplant** (*1011 Bridge Road, eggplantshop.com*) to the latest clothing from boutiques like Charlie (*1006 Bridge Road, charlieboutique.com*) and Geraniums Boutique (*1011 Bridge Road, geraniumsboutique.com*).

Literary lovers will have a hard time tearing themselves away from **Taylor Books** (*226 Capitol Street, taylorbookswv.com*). It also just so happens to be next door to Charleston's own **Pies & Pints** (*piesandpints*.net)—if you're still hungry. From May through October, visitors can also take advantage of the wonders that are the **East End Bazaar** (*Washington Street East, charlestoneastend.com/east-end-bazaar*), full of live music, food, arts, and crafts from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays.

If you're lucky, you'll be around when one of Charleston's major events is taking place, be it the 10-day long arts festival **FestivALL** (*festivallcharleston.com*) in June or one of the many live radio shows known as **MountainStage** (*mountainstage.org*) throughout the year.

LAURA WILCOX ROTE

Hinton & Beyond

Another city on the New River, Summers' County's Hinton is about an hour from the gorge and is full of friendly, forward-thinking folks. You can relive history on any corner, but perhaps no place takes visitors back quite like **The Ritz Theatre** (*211 Ballengee Street, ritzwv.com*). The lobby maintains its 1929 appearance, and you can still sit in the original red seats. The renovated Ritz hosts an eclectic mix of movies, plays, touring performers, and special events.

The free **Hinton City Railroad Museum** (*206 Temple Street*) and the **Veterans Memorial Museum of Southern West Virginia** (*419 Ballengee Street*) are popular stops in Hinton, and the county is also home to **King's Civil War Museum** and the **Campbell-Flannagan-Murrell House Museum** (*cfm-fmh.org*)—Hinton's oldest standing residential structure, circa 1875. The Railroad Museum tells the story of the county's railroad industry and has a must-see John Henry woodcarving exhibit. You'll find a statue of **John Henry** in the nearby tiny town of Talcott.

Hinton attracts visitors all summer long to places like **Bluestone State Park** with more than 2,100 acres next to Bluestone Lake. At Bluestone Lake Marina, you can rent a boat, kayak, or even supplies. Hunting and fishing opportunities abound in the more than 17,000-acre **Bluestone Wildlife Management Area.** Head to the fishing pier below Bluestone Dam

Hinton is full of unique shopping, dining, and recreation opportunities in the heart of downtown. Summers County is also home to a statue of John Henry in the tiny town of Talcott near the Greenbrier River.

to see if the trout are biting, or take a short trip to nearby **Sandstone Falls**—the largest waterfall on the New River and a fisherman's favorite for smallmouth bass and catfish.

Nearby, **Pipestem Resort State Park** is more than 4,000 acres of adventure on the Mercer County border, offering views of the Bluestone Gorge, plus lodges, cottages, campgrounds, golf courses, restaurants, and conference facilities. Also in the county, Brooks is home to the **Three Rivers Avian Center**, an animal shelter for injured and endangered wild birds and raptor rehabilitation.

While history and the great outdoors are at every turn, you'll also find great food and shopping. **The Market on Courthouse Square** (*200 Ballengee Street, themarketwv.com*) has some of the best eats and space around, with gourmet sandwiches and indoor and outdoor seating. For just plain cool shopping, check out **Otter & Oak** (*302 Second Avenue, otterandoak.com*), a fantastic general store and art gallery on Second Avenue. Its shelves are stocked with everything from boating gear to toys, jewelry, purses, and crafts.

The Market on Courthouse Square and Otter & Oak are must-stop local businesses in downtown Hinton. Otter & Oak sells everything from art to accessories to adventure gear.

Lewisburg & Beyond

An hour and 15 minutes' drive from the New River Gorge Bridge, Lewisburg is one of West Virginia's best small towns. While the population hovers around 4,000, this city in the Allegheny Mountains has metropolitan amenities with diverse shops, eateries, and an abundance of arts. You can easily spend a day walking around downtown.

Lewisburg's **Carnegie Hall** (*105 Church Street, carnegiehallwv.com*), is one of only four Carnegies in the world. Inside, the main stage has a schedule packed with music and drama, and the beautiful venue also hosts outdoor concerts, classes, and more. This creative hub is also home to the **Greenbrier Valley Theatre** (*113 East Washington Street, gvtheatre.org*), a year-round theater that often brings national productions to town.

There is shopping to meet every need in Lewisburg, from hip, contemporary clothing and accessories at **Wolf Creek Gallery** (*112 West Washington Street*) to all of your outdoor needs at **Serenity Now** (*207 West Washington Street, serenitynowoutfitters.com*). You can shop American-made arts and crafts at **Harmony Ridge Gallery** by day (*209 West Washington Street, harmonridgegallery.com*) and enjoy the gallery's wine bar, Red Key 3, by night.

Fine dining and cocktails abound at restaurants like **The Livery Tavern** (*217 East Washington Street, liverytavern.com*) and Stella's, while you can grab more casual fare at **Stardust Café** (*102 East Washington Street, stardustcafewv.com*) or **Food & Friends** (*213 West Washington Street, foodandfriendslewisburgwv.com*).

Lewisburg is also known for stellar food-centric festivals that take over its streets, like **Taste of Our Towns**, lovingly called TOOT, scheduled for October 10, 2015, and the **Chocolate Festival** (*lewisburgchocolatefestival.com*), which will celebrate its 10th year in 2016.

LEFT: LAURA WILCOX ROTE; CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: NIKKI BOWMAN, ELIZABETH ROTH; NIKKI BOWMAN; ELIZABETH ROTH; NIKKI BOWMAN

The Livery Tavern, Wolf Creek Gallery, and The Greenbrier are each beautiful spots in Greenbrier County. You can also hike the Greenbrier River Trail and work up an appetite for lunch at the popular Stardust Cafe in downtown Lewisburg.

For outdoor adventure try the **Greenbrier River Trail** *(greenbrier-trailstatepark.com)* a scenic, 79-mile trail formed from the conversion of the former C&O Railroad right-of-way. Just outside of town is **Organ Cave** *(304.645.7600, organcave.com)*, the second largest commercial cave in the eastern U.S. and rich in Civil War-era history.

Just nine miles from Lewisburg, **The Greenbrier** *(300 West Main Street, greenbrier.com)* in White Sulphur Springs is one of the country's best resorts and home to three championship golf courses. The Greenbrier Course was redesigned by Jack Nicklaus in 1977 for the 1979 Ryder Cup. The Meadows is a 6,795-yard Bob Cupp design with luxurious views of the surrounding mountains. The Old White TPC was the first 18-hole course at the resort and has been restored to its original, 1914 design—it serves as the venue for **The Greenbrier Classic,** an annual PGA Tour event. The Greenbrier also has more than a dozen restaurants, beautiful sitting places, a gift shop, and casino.

Summersville

Most people know this Nicholas County city for its treasured lake—with a surface area of nearly 3,000 acres and 60 miles of shoreline. **Summersville Lake** is the largest lake in West Virginia, and you can explore it just by traveling 20 miles from the New River Gorge Bridge.

The lake is a direct result of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' creation of the Summersville Dam in 1966, made to prevent flooding. The lake's namesake is a quiet community, established in 1820 and home to less than 4,000 people. In addition to kayaking, paddleboarding, boating, or simply soaking up the sun by the lake (many such packages are available at **visitaotg.com**), visitors also get a kick out of the **Summersville Lake Lighthouse** *(278 Summersville Lake Road)*, the only lighthouse in the landlocked state, of course. This charming tourist attraction is made from a damaged wind turbine column, is 10 stories high, and weighs 72,000 pounds. Visitors who climb the 122 steps inside will find a panoramic view of Summersville Lake at the top.

Want to scuba dive? Check out the full-service **Sarge's Dive Shop** *(1706 Airport Road, sarges.net)*. You can rent equipment, take classes, charter a trip, and more.

You'll find plenty of good bites to eat during your relaxing visit to Summersville, too. **Café Acropolis** *(331 McMillion Drive)* serves up Greek and Italian specialties for lunch and dinner, while nearby, the family-friendly sports bar **Maloney's** *(603 Church Street, maloneyswv.com)* invites you to sidle up to the bar, and watch the big game. Back at the lake, an order of wings goes great with a cold beer at **Long Point Bar & Grille** *(1289 Summersville Lake Road)*, a favorite of locals that also offers great views in a laid-back country bar setting.

NIKKI BOWMAN

Summersville Lake is a water wonderland just 20 miles from the New River Gorge.

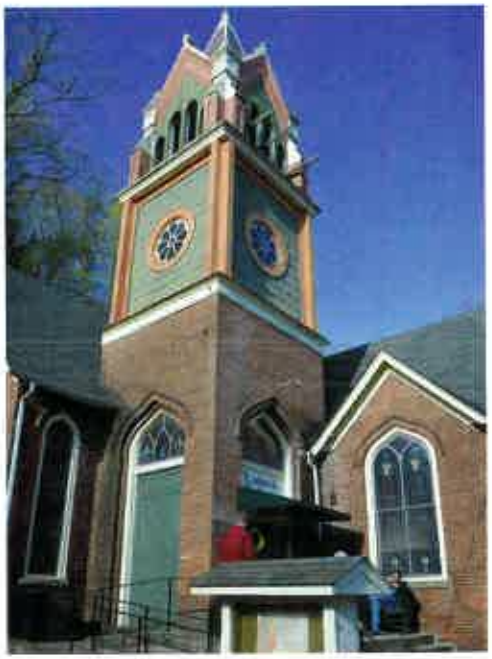
Sutton

Just an hour from Fayetteville, Sutton is also full of charms with fine dining restaurants like **Café Cimino Country Inn** (*616 Main Street, cafeciminocountryinn.com*) and local food and arts aplenty at **The Artisans at P.J. Berry's** (*226 Main Street, pjberrys.com*). Part inn, part restaurant, Café Cimino offers exceptional service and a gourmet culinary experience that's often unexpected in a small town, while the restaurant side of P.J. Berry's has a great menu of casual fare at affordable prices, serves microbrews from the Fayetteville area, and hosts live music.

You can catch a film at the historic **Elk Theatre** (*192 Main Street, elktheatre.com*), a one-screen movie theater built in the 1930s. Or if a live performance is more your style, check out the schedule at **Landmark Studio for the Arts**, home to Sutton's thriving community theater housed in a 19th century church.

Once you've explored downtown, head north on Interstate 79 for shopping at **Flatwoods Factory Stores** (*250 Skidmore Lane, flatwoodsfactorystores.com*) where favorites like Tommy Hilfiger, Fenton, and Fiestaware can be found.

But one can hardly talk about Sutton without mentioning the **Elk River Water Trail**, a 72-mile stretch of Elk River with easy access, navigable paths to and from the river, and informational kiosks and signs. A walking trail system has also been developed, featuring everything from trails in the center of town to a moderate fitness trail to challenging treks through the woods. And the word's already out about **Sutton Dam**, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project that was completed in 1961 and created Sutton Lake, one of the area's greatest treasures with more than 40 miles of shoreline for swimming and camping and more than 1,500 acres of surface for fishing and boating.



Sutton in Braxton County is home to a little bit of everything, just an hour from Fayetteville. You'll find plenty of places to fish or boat near the Sutton Dam, and you can expect a great meal from Cafe Cimino Country Inn. P.J. Berry's offers up both great eats and crafts in town. Landmark Studio for the Arts is a thriving community theater.

CLOCKWISE: NIKKI BOWMAN; CARL A. WITTFORD (2); NIKKI BOWMAN

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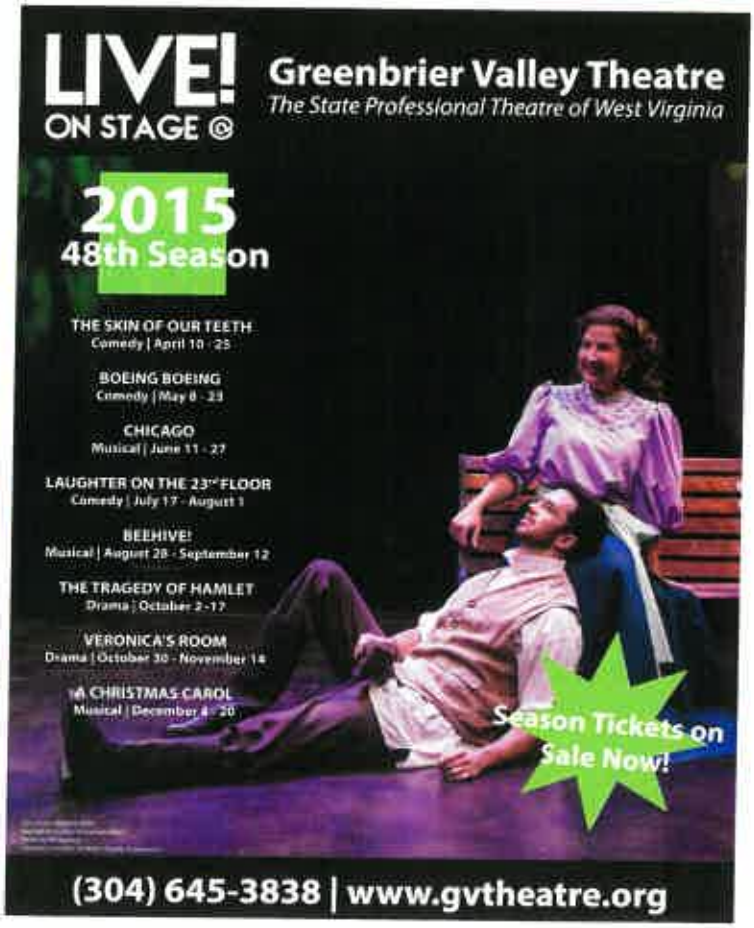
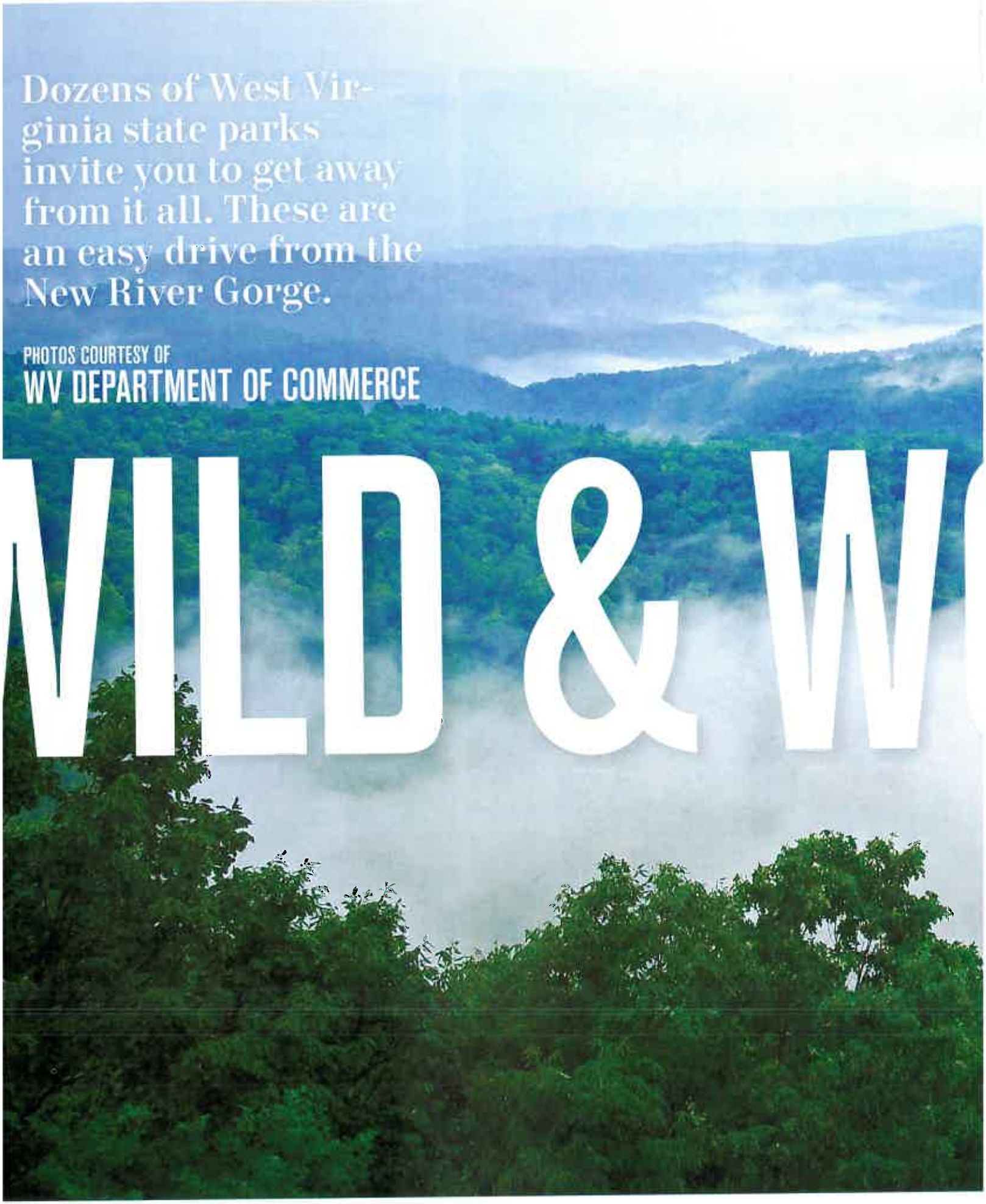


Dozens of West Virginia state parks invite you to get away from it all. These are an easy drive from the New River Gorge.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF
WV DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

WILD & W



ONDERFU

West Virginia is covered in untamed beauty. Tall hardwoods tower overhead and little-known creeks and streams trickle through the woods. The forests provide refuge for birds and bears, deer and ducks, but they are also an escape for people. The third most forested state in the U.S. also has quite a lot of space preserved with purpose, as state parks and forests are in seemingly every neck of the woods. You won't have to drive far to uncover everything from a historic gristmill to aerial tramways between the mountains to waterfalls and more.

IN FAYETTE COUNTY

Postcard perfect, **Babcock State Park** (*486 Babcock Road, Clifftop, babcocksp.com*) defines West Virginia for many folks. More than 4,000 acres, this wild oasis in Clifftop in Fayette County is immediately recognizable for its Glade Creek Grist Mill. Today's mill was completed in the 1970s as a re-creation of the one that once ground grain there so many years ago, called Cooper's Mill. More than 500 mills operated in West Virginia at the turn of the century. The current mill is fully functional and continues to make freshly ground cornmeal that visitors can buy, depending on availability and conditions of the fast-flowing trout stream below.

But even without the picturesque mill, Babcock State Park is a beauty just 20 miles from Fayetteville. To relax, take a walk and enjoy the scenic overlooks or simply sit for a spell and listen to the sound of rushing water. Adventurous folks will also find quite a few options at the park, with fishing, boating, and more than 20 miles of hiking trails. Paddleboats, rowboats, and canoes can be rented at the marina in-season at the 19-acre Boley Lake. The park also has a swimming pool; game courts offering volleyball, horseshoes, tennis, and basketball; and horse and pony rides. The park's headquarters includes a quaint gift shop for souvenirs and snacks, too.

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Babcock State Park in Clifftop is a beautiful photo op. Nearby Raleigh County's Little Beaver State Park is a hidden gem in West Virginia. Carnifex Ferry Battlefield State Park is a must for Civil War buffs. Take in picture-perfect views from Hawks Nest State Park in Ansted.

Babcock State Park is especially beautiful in the summer and autumn. During the summer months, the park's naturalist often leads special nature tours. You'll also be able to choose from movie presentations and interpretive programming to learn about the diverse flora and fauna during summers at the park.

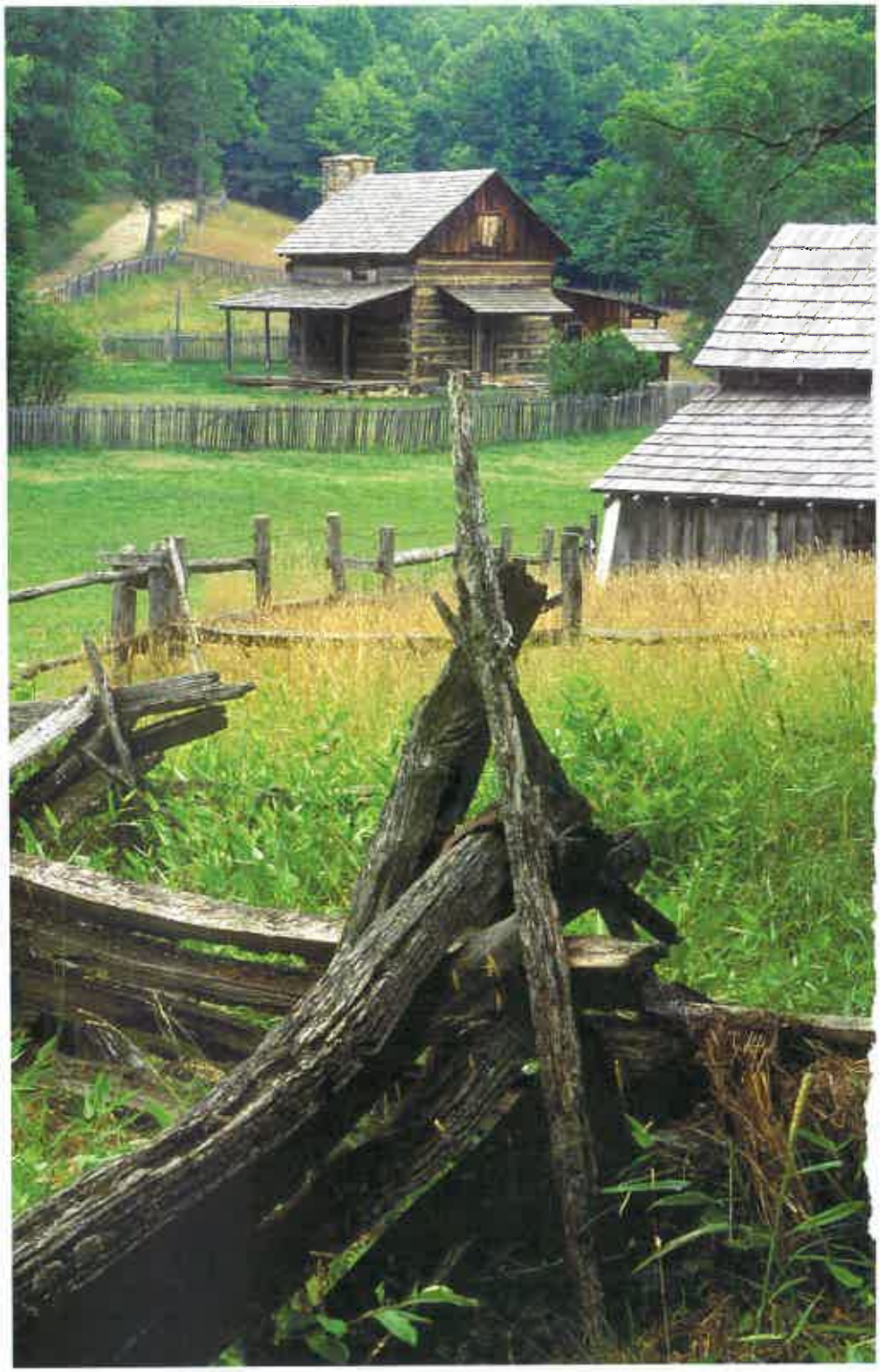
Hawks Nest State Park (*9 Hawks Nest Park Road, Ansted, hawksnestsp.com*) is another special place and an even shorter drive from Adventures on the Gorge—just 16 miles from downtown Fayetteville. Hawks Nest is known for its hikes and remarkable scenic views, especially the view from the Lover's Leap overlook. Legend has it that a Native American brave and a maiden who fell in love but were forbidden to marry jumped to their deaths here in a fit of despair at what is now called Lover's Leap. The view of the New River valley from this popular overlook is well worth the climb up 100 stone steps to an outcropping at the cliff's edge.

The aerial tram at Hawks Nest is a must for great views and a perspective like none other. For a small fee, you can climb aboard the tram for a quick trip—just minutes—from the lodge to the marina at the bottom of the New River Gorge. At the bottom, you can take the little ones to explore Hawks Nest Nature Center, filled with educational nature displays, before boarding a New River Jetboat. You'll never forget this wild trip, as one of the boats takes you gleefully across the river to admire the New River Gorge Bridge more than 800 feet above your head.

MORE EASY DRIVES

Explore more than 2,000 acres of heavily forested land at **Bluestone State Park** in Summers County just south of Hinton (*bluestonesp.com*). Modern cabins, a campground, and Bluestone Lake await at this southern West Virginia wonderland. Bluestone Lake is the state's third-largest body of water.

You can learn a lot from a visit to **Carnifex Ferry Battlefield State Park** (*1194 Carnifex Ferry Road, Summersville, carnifexferrybattlefieldstatepark.com*), on the rim of the Gauley River Canyon. At the height of the Civil War, Union and Confederate troops clashed at the Henry Patterson Farm overlooking Carnifex Ferry. Confederate troops retreated and weren't able to regain control of the Kanawha Valley—clearing the way for West Virginia statehood. Tour the Patterson Museum or simply go for a hike or picnic at the beautiful park. The museum is open seasonally on weekends. Check the schedule for Civil War reenactments.



Pipestem Resort State Park (top, bottom) is 4,000 acres of wilderness about an hour-and-a-half from the New River Gorge. Pioneer Farm at Twin Falls Resort State Park (right) takes visitors back to the 1830s.

In Raleigh County, **Little Beaver State Park** (*Beaver, www.littlebeaverstatepark.com*) is a hidden gem at less than 600 acres, but with no shortage of amenities. Fish for bass, trout, and more year-round on the 18-acre lake, or rent a paddleboat, rowboat, canoe, or kayak during summer months. Hiking and biking are also favorite pastimes at Little Beaver.

Looking for even more scenic views? Travel to **Pipestem Resort State Park** (*3405 Pipestem Drive, Pipestem, www.pipestemresort.com*), about an hour-and-a-half from the New River Gorge. Approximately 4,000 acres of sweeping wilderness, this park invites you to admire the Bluestone River gorge, whether from the comfort of the modern lodge or while kicking back in the park's aerial tramway, which takes you on a memorable six-minute, 3,600-foot ride through the gorge—a journey that would take an hour or more on foot.

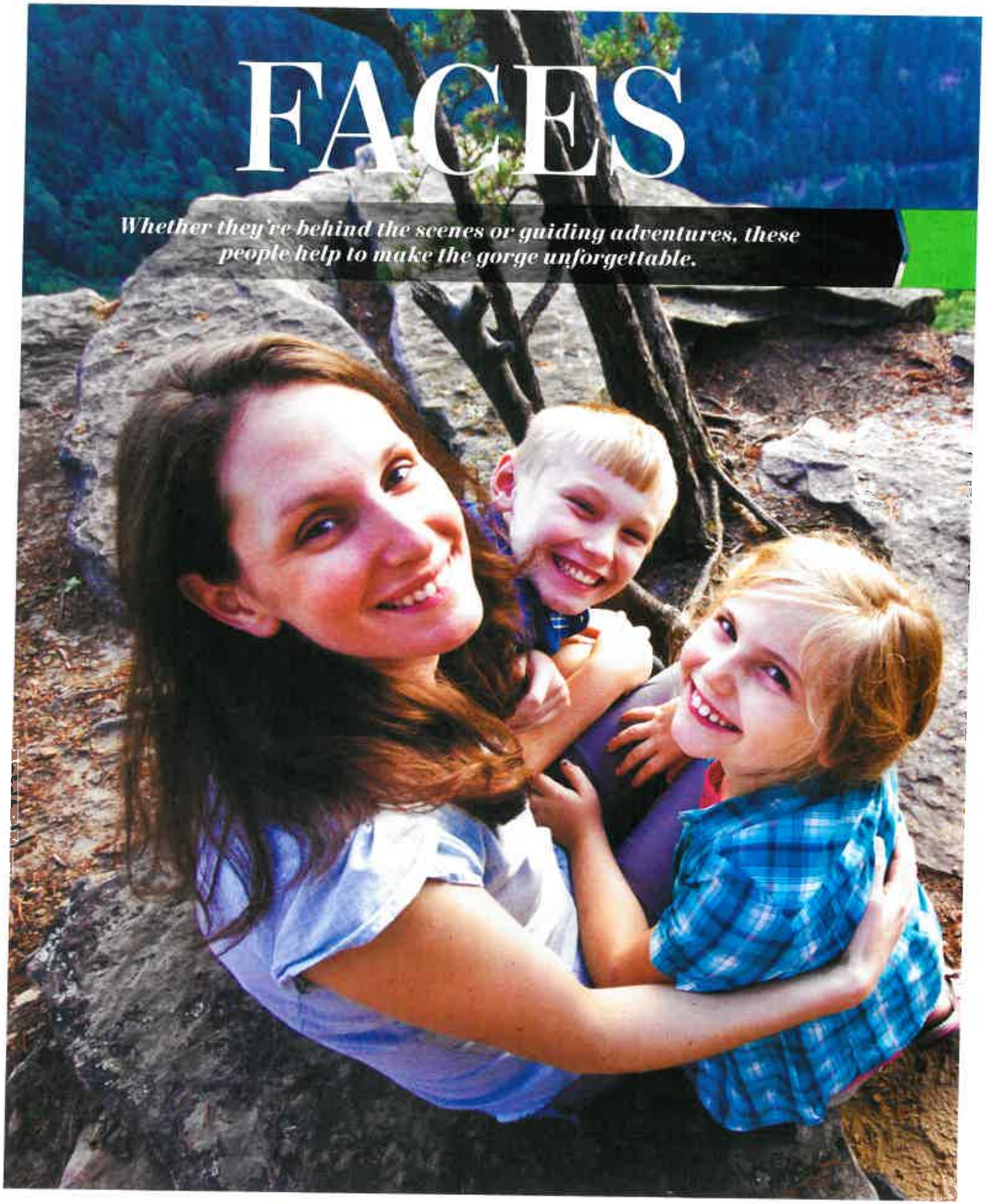
Pipestem is also known for its golf—of all kinds, but especially for its two challenging courses: the 18-hole, par 72 championship course as well as the 9-hole, par 3 course. The park also offers up miniature golf, disc golf, and even the lesser-known footgolf.

Follow your sense of adventure to **Twin Falls Resort State Park** (*Mullens, www.twinfallsresort.com*), about an hour's drive from Fayetteville. This park offers up a secluded round of golf on the 18-hole, par 71 championship golf course. Or maybe you prefer to swim, hike, or mountain bike in the southern part of the state. Twelve hiking trails offer everything from remote wooden paths to two waterfalls. Twin Falls Resort State Park is also home to Pioneer Farm, a restored house that harkens back to the 1830s.

Explore more of West Virginia's state parks at www.wvstateparks.com.

FACES

Whether they're behind the scenes or guiding adventures, these people help to make the gorge unforgettable.



Meet the Grill Master

Chef John Holstine cooks up the best barbecue around with his combination of skill, patience, and a lot of love.

JOHN HOLSTINE IS A COOK, AND A GOOD ONE—his barbecue is revered at Adventures on the Gorge and throughout the New River Gorge region. But when John describes the work he does in the kitchen every day, he doesn't get caught up in the intricacies of the process or romanticize the work. John's more straightforward than that. He loves what he does—and the barbecue that comes from it—but to him it's simple. "I come into work and I build a fire in the smoker, and then I pull my ribs out, rub them down, and slide them in," he says. "Then I just sit there, watch them, smell them, check them. Cooking ribs on the smoker is like taking care of a baby."

That's where a lot of people go wrong with smoked meat, John says. They know it needs to stay hot in the smoker for a long time, but they don't give it the attention it needs and deserves. "A lot of people put them on the grill or in the smoker and they keep the metric temperature where it's supposed to be, but they walk off and leave them," he says. "I actually babysit my ribs." Once John spent an entire night sitting up to smoke a whole hog that weighed 250 pounds, nodding off for a few minutes at a time then waking up to stoke the fire. It wasn't the best night's sleep, but the smoked pork that came from it? "It was wonderful," John says. "I served the whole thing one evening and there was nothing left—I actually ran out. And everybody spent the whole night talking about how wonderful it was. It was tender, it was juicy, it had that smoked flavor."

John has been working at Adventures on the Gorge since its inception, and he worked at Rivermen, one of the rafting companies that was folded into the adventure resort, before that. He got his first job in a kitchen when he was around 25, after he'd been laid off from a construction job. He started out washing dishes at a local restaurant and quickly worked his way through the ranks. Before he started that job he hadn't done much cooking himself, but he wasn't a total novice. "It sounds weird maybe, but most of my cooking I learned from watching my wife and my mom cook," he says. "I was one of those guys who, when my mom cooked, I hovered around in the kitchen watching what she was doing." Plus he was a hard worker and paid close attention to what the restaurant's cooks were doing so he could learn from them. Before long John caught the eye of someone at Rivermen, and they offered him a job. "And I've done the same thing all these years since—cook, cook, cook, cook, cook."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

WE KNOW WHAT you're thinking: Buffler's, Chetty's, Smokey's—why do all of these restaurants have such wacky names? Well rest assured that the story behind the names of those restaurants is just as good as the food.

Smokey's on the Gorge was the first of the restaurants at what is now Adventures on the Gorge, followed closely by Chetty's Pub. When Smokey's opened at Class VI River Runners in 1998, the owners named it after someone who embodied the commitment to excellence that epitomized their resort—bus driver Smokey Norton. "Smokey Norton was one person who, back in those days, was probably commented and complimented the most relative to hospitality," says Larry Poli, the resort's food and beverage director. When the next restaurant opened, they dubbed it **Chetty's** for Smokey's brother and fellow bus driver, Chetty Norton. "These were guys who wore the starched white shirt every day," Larry says. "You'd see them there every day while the guests were on the river, waxing the bus."

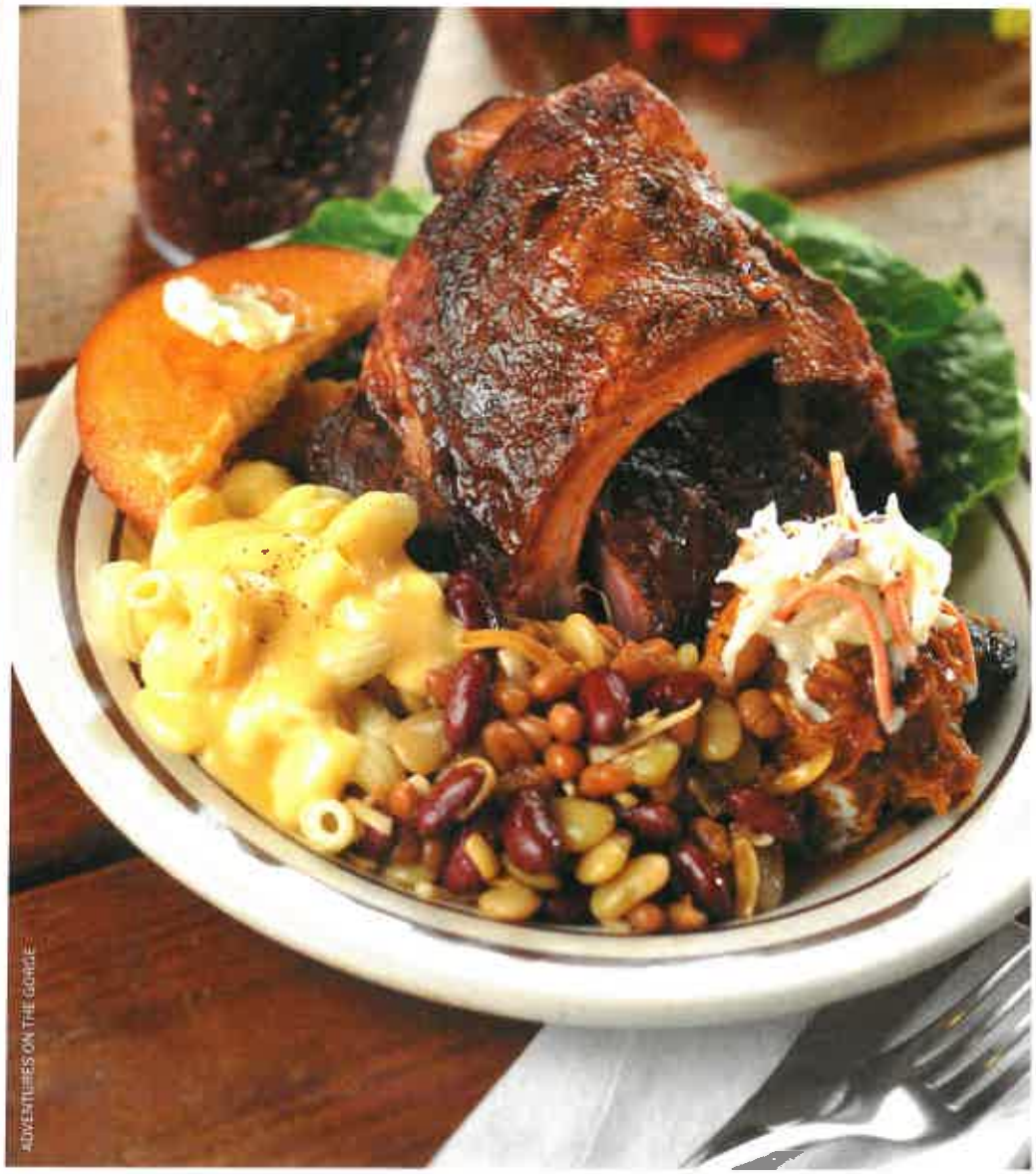
The resort's third restaurant, **Buffler's BBQ & Pizza**, was named after a former Rivermen river manager named John "Buffler" Bray. John loved to run rivers, and he traveled the world to see as many as he could between seasons. He lived in a teepee complete with a buffalo head greeting visitors at its entrance. That and his lumbering walk gave him the nickname "Buffler." He truly embraced the "mountain man" lifestyle. John passed away in 2011.

These days John spends his winters cooking up hearty sandwiches and burgers at Chetty's Pub and his summers smoking ribs, pulled pork, and beef brisket at Buffler's BBQ & Pizza. "They call me 'the grill master,'" he says. He's right—all the staff and locals know John as the man with the mouthwatering barbecue.

In 2014 John was named Employee of the Year at Adventures on the Gorge. "The thing about John is that he's full of passion," says Larry Poli, the resort's food and beverage director. "He acts every day as if he owns the business because he's passionate about it."

"A lot of people tell me I'm the only person they know who loves to go to work every day," John says. Is that what makes his barbecue so good? "I hope it is," he says. "I do put a lot of time and a lot of heart into it. They say it's the best around, and I hope it is." John's approach to barbecue is a lot like John himself: It's straightforward, unfussy, and doesn't cut corners. His ribs marinate overnight, in a rub made of 12 ingredients. "But I'm not going to tell you what those are," John laughs. He doesn't use any chemicals while he smokes his meat—no charcoal or fire starter, only wood from cherry and apple trees. "I do it the old-timey way," he says. That means more work for John, but better food for the guests—which makes it all worth it. "My favorite part of my job is seeing the smiles on people's faces," he says. "My challenge every day is to make people happy with my food, and when they leave my restaurant smiling, that's really a cool thing."

written by SHAY MAUNZ
photographed by CHRIS JACKSON PHOTOGRAPHY



BELOW A typical dinner entree at Buffler's will fill you up, from barbecue ribs and macaroni and cheese to beans, coleslaw, and cornbread.

ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE

Nate Herrold and Ken Linch make great beer—the kind they and everyone else wants to drink—in Fayetteville.

Hometown Brew

Bridge Brew Works is a small brewery with one big dream—make great beer.

FROM THE OUTSIDE, BRIDGE BREW WORKS doesn't look like much. It's a blank-faced rectangle of a building with no adornment or pretense—nothing to hint at the magic that happens inside. But as soon as you open the door that changes: You're confronted by giant, gleaming silver tubs bubbling with beer, and towers of aluminum kegs and bottles. The air smells of yeast and alcohol.

It's tempting to say that this building is Bridge Brew Works, but really Bridge Brew Works is Nate Herrold and Ken Linch, the microbrewery's founders and brewers. Ken and Nate have their hands in every pint of beer that comes from Bridge Brew Works. Not literally, of course—that wouldn't be hygienic—but they're involved in every aspect of production, from formulating recipes to the manual labor of the brewing itself to putting the beer in kegs and bottles so it can be shipped to the people who want to drink it. And a lot of people very much want to drink it.

The brewery has an average rating of 3.86 out of five on Beer Advocate's website and a 3.5 on the beer-centric social media app Untappd. *Business Insider* named the brewery's Peregrine Porter the best beer brewed in West Virginia. Serious Eats singled out the Dun Glen Double. "We make beer that we would want to drink, and that works out pretty well," Ken says.

Ken and Nate started Bridge Brew Works in 2010. They both got into home brewing in the mid-1990s and learned a lot about craft beer on a small scale in their own homes. "We started brewing at the same time, but we didn't know each other back then," Ken says. They met at the now-defunct Morgantown Brewing Company, where Nate started out as a volunteer—"It was a field I knew I wanted

to get into, so I volunteered to get started," he says—and worked his way up to become assistant brewer. Ken was a regular at the brewpub who took more interest in the brewing process than the average consumer. He spent more than two decades working at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), but for a while his heart was back home in his garage where his brewing equipment was. "I had an engineering background, and as a home brewer, each time I brewed I would do something to improve my system," he says. "So I took it pretty seriously, and I was sick of what I was doing and ready to get out of the city."

Around 2007 the pair had the bold but irresistible idea of opening a microbrewery together, and they quickly settled on Fayetteville as the spot to do it. Nathan is from Ohio but had taken family trips to Fayetteville as a kid and was a raft guide there in college. Ken didn't have any ties to the area but was taken with the small-town feel of the place. And they both liked the idea of being the only brewery in town. "Nobody was doing this around here," Ken says. Since then they've embraced the hip, outdoorsy community they're a part of. They named one beer Crux, for example, after a rock climbing term for a route's most difficult passage. A local artist and rock climber designed their bottles. "We try to keep connected with some of the local West Virginia businesses," Ken says.

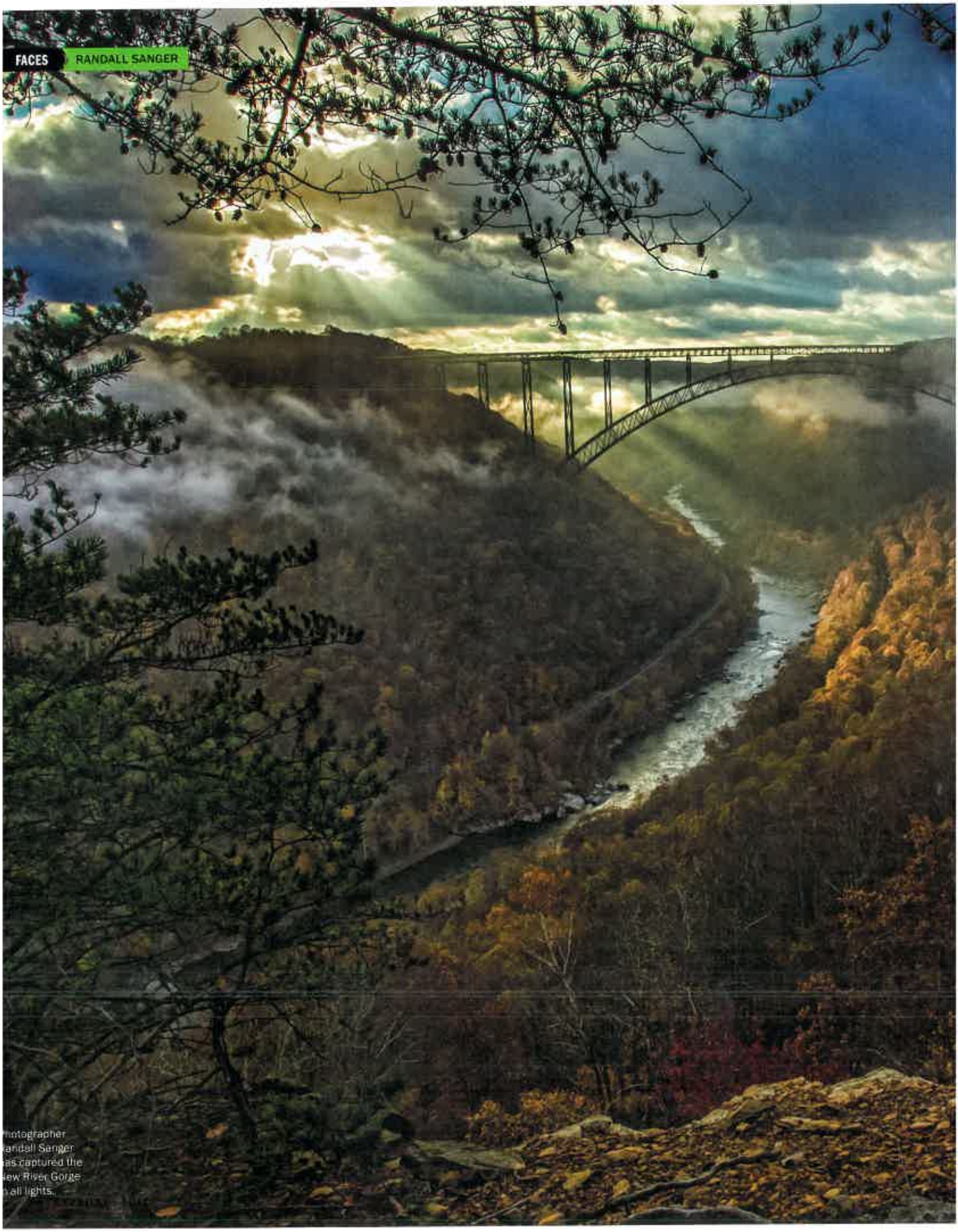
Bridge Brew Works is a small operation—really small. It's just Ken and Nate working in the warehouse, and they like it that way. "When we came into business, we wanted not to be the biggest but to be the best, and I think that really shines through," Nate says. "We're really hands-on from the very beginning to the very end, and we're super proud of every drop that's made because we handle it every step of the way." They supervise every batch as it makes its way from grain to beer. They fill every keg themselves, and fill and cap every bottle with a machine that can only do two bottles at a time. "It's slow going," Nate says. "But it's good for us because it really lends itself to quality control." In spring 2014, when they wanted to build an addition to their facility, Ken and Nate pulled out some tools and did it themselves. They worked at the brewery almost three weeks straight, brewing beer during the week and doing construction on the weekends.

"When we came into business, we wanted not to be the biggest but to be the best, and I think that really shines through."
NATE HERROLD

The only thing Ken and Nate don't do is give tours. State law doesn't allow them to offer beer samples, which everybody knows is the main reason you go on a tour. Nate and Ken say that if state legislators change that law they'll gladly open their doors to visitors, but for now they're happy focusing on what they think is most important: making beer. "It keeps us really busy already," Nate says.

written by SHAY MAUNZ
photographed by CHRIS JACKSON PHOTOGRAPHY

Work at Bridge Brew Works is very hands-on, as the brewery's founders do everything from the brewing to the bottling to the cleanup from their nondescript building in Fayetteville.



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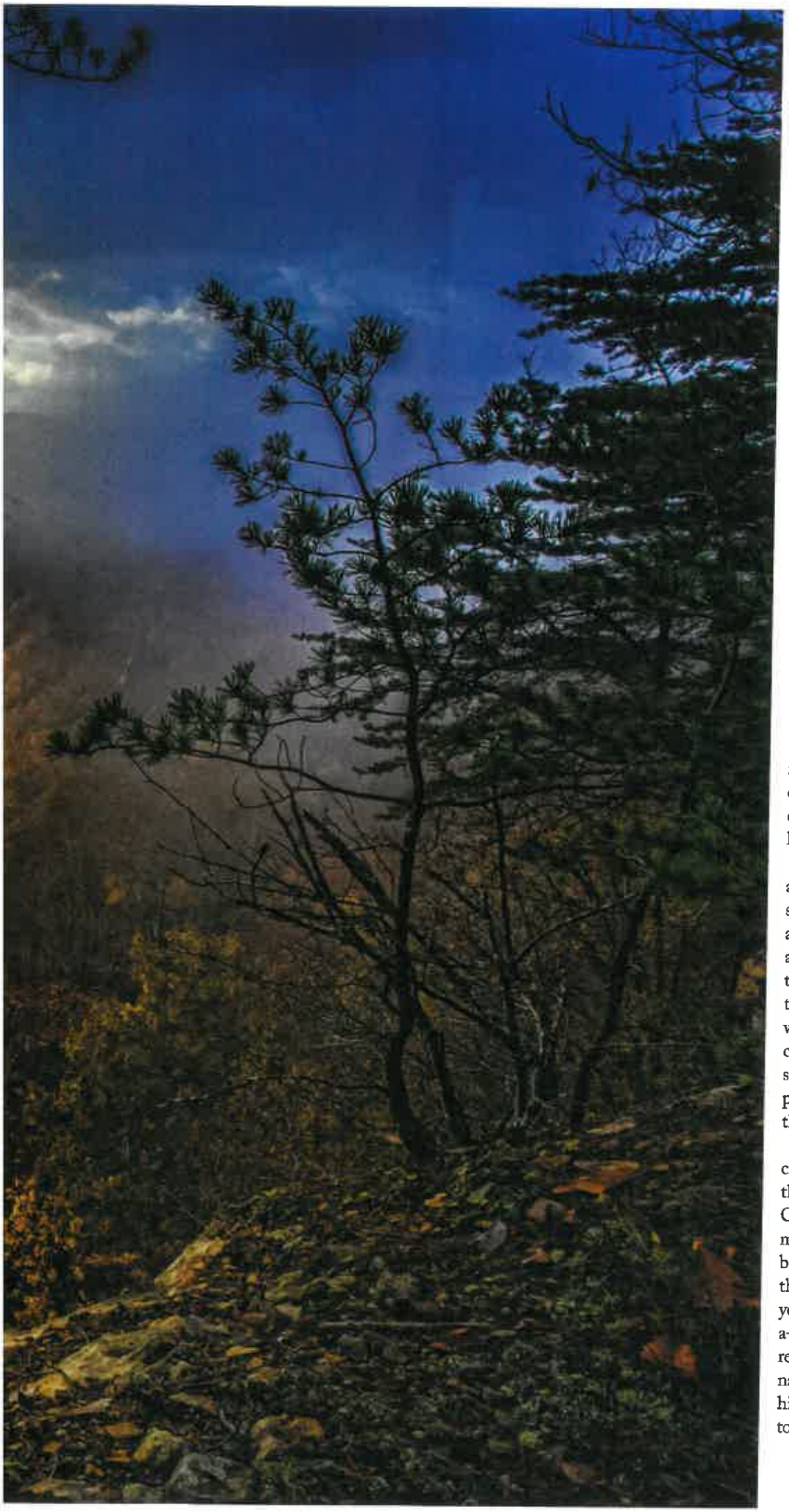


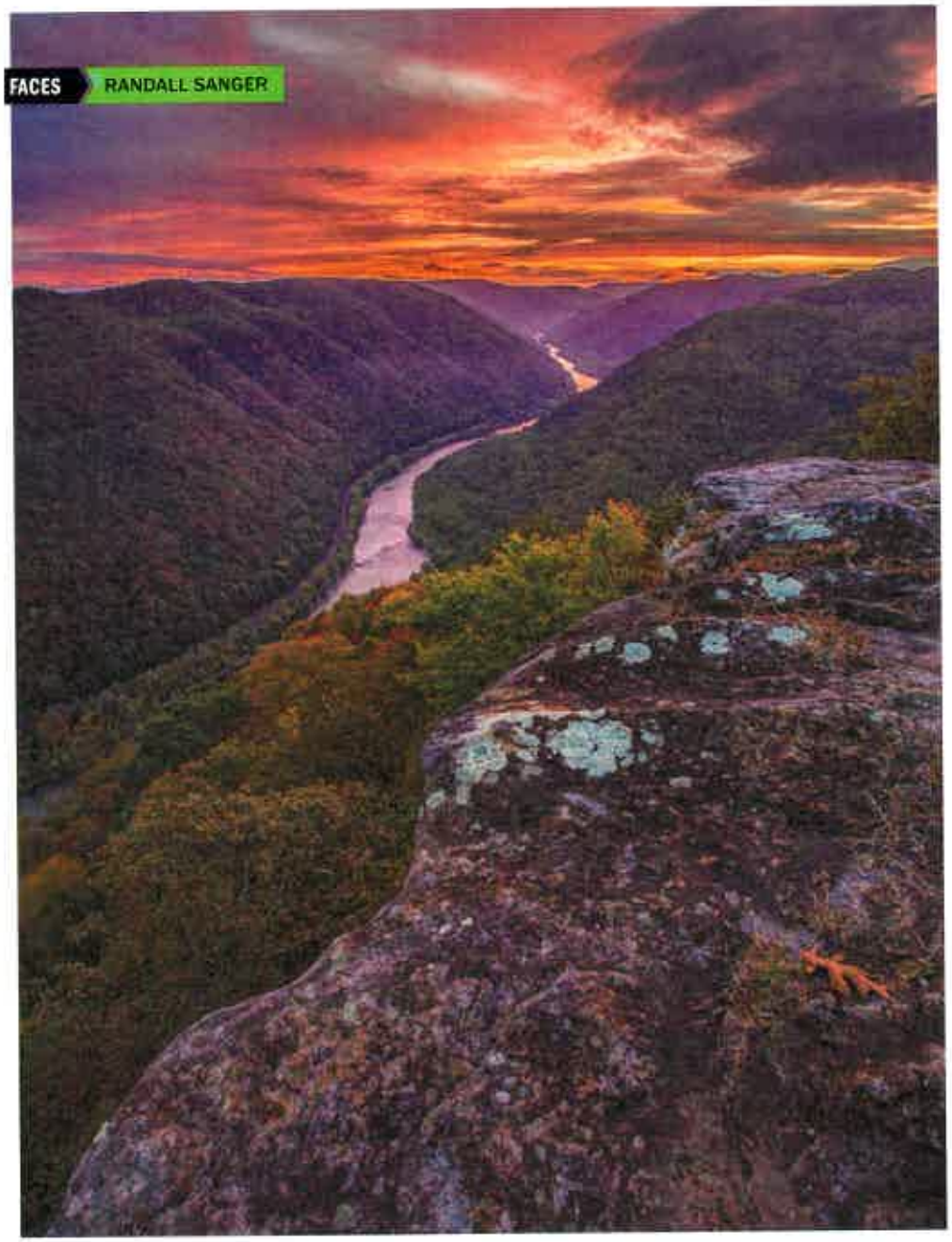
Hunting the Unreal

Photographer Randall Sanger captures the hidden beauty in West Virginia's wildest places.

IT ISN'T QUITE DAWN, and the gibbous moon is still high overhead. But Randall Sanger is already up, standing far outside the lanky shadow of the New River Gorge Bridge with his camera pack over both shoulders. He's getting ready to climb a mighty hill, eyeing the sky and hoping—praying—for a milky cloud or some light fog to diffuse the coming sunrise. Otherwise it'll be too bright to shoot the bridge at its best and he might as well forget the dangerous trek he's about to make. "For folks who aren't as in shape, it's a difficult scramble. I don't recommend it for everyone," he says. "It's crazy in the middle of the day. Going up by headlamp before dawn is," he laughs, "tough."

Five minutes after his plea to the heavens, a few clouds and some slow-moving fog enter stage right and left. That's his cue. "It took me about 25 minutes to get up there. Had to crawl a section of it, pulling myself up with exposed tree roots and rhododendrons branches." By the time he gets his bearings at the top of the bluff, what climbers call the Sunshine Buttress, the clouds and fog have completely obscured the sky. Randall takes a moment to rephrase his prayers. "I had to laugh and say, 'OK, maybe not this many clouds.'"

Thirty minutes more and the obstructions clear just enough to frame the newly risen sun. To the naked eye the scene is already breathtaking. Cool blue early dawn skies and a thin layer of fog mingle with clouds, forcing the light into dramatic beams and shadows beneath the bridge. Below, the valley is a patchwork of fall reds, browns, and yellows sloping down to the river. It's a once-in-a-lifetime shot, and Randall's got a knack for recognizing this sort of thing. The photo, aptly named Sunshine Buttress Sunrise, is now among his favorites. "I think it's due to the effort it took to get there. And the proof that the good Lord has



ABOVE Grandview is a popular overlook known for its fantastic view 1,400 feet above the New River.

a sense of humor. I mean, I asked for fog."

Photo ops like this in the New River Gorge are Randall's raison d'être. When he makes the two-and-a-half-hour drive from his home in Williamson to the Fayette County area, not only does he get to squeeze, climb, hike, and stumble into some of the most unspoiled corners of the gorge, he gets to capture them and share them with the world. "Growing up, everywhere I went if I told someone I'm from West Virginia, I'd get laughed at," he says. "With my work I try to show people that there's more to this state than those crazy stereotypes."

In terms of profession, photography wasn't Randall's first inclination. As a boy growing up in Williamson, he was more of an explorer. He regularly visited the New River Gorge, along the way earning the requisite knee scrapes and splinters of a pint-sized adventurer. At home he poured over each issue of *National Geographic* and *Wonderful West Virginia*. "I've always loved nature. I've always had that wanderlust and could usually be found roaming riverbanks or the woods as a child," he says. "I started thinking, 'Wow. I need to capture some of these places that I'm seeing.'" Just after high school, Randall got his first camera, a graduation present from his parents. "It was a film camera. It was expensive to develop all the images and see they were all wrong." Still, once he got that camera, he got the bug.

And the bug stuck with him through college, where he pursued a degree in business and marketing. It crept up on him between classes and assignments, the urge to save and share the beauty he saw. "It was self-taught. I didn't take any classes. I was just out there figuring out what I was doing right and wrong," he says. "It's how stuff hits me. I don't go out seeking anything specific. It hits me and I know I have to capture it. The light might be perfect that moment or it might be making a common scene look unreal."

After college Randall started traveling for his job as an apparel buyer for a department store. He saw New York City and Vegas, but kept his photography cordoned off in the dusty mental realms of hobby and side business. Although he lived in West Virginia for the bulk of his post-college years, it wasn't until he returned to Williamson with his wife, Melissa, to spend time with his aging parents, that he took the opportunity to try his hand at being a full-time photographer. Of course he started with wedding and portrait photography, but for him, faces didn't hold the magic of a wild, rocky mountainside or secret stream cutting through dark forest. He relished every chance he got to explore the state and cut his own path through the muck and mire. "I've seen beautiful places all over the country and in a few foreign countries. They make pretty images, but what I capture of West Virginia, that's what means something to me. Because it's home."

The New River Gorge area, with more than 70,000 acres of quiet trails, diamond-white waterfalls, and lichen-dotted bluffs, soon became his favorite haunt once again. "The gorge is just an amazing place. I used to think going to the bridge was going to the gorge, but when I started really exploring the trails, I started to feel what the gorge was really about," Randall says. "The opportunities for photographers are off the charts. Everywhere you go you have a majestic view, waterfalls, and rivers. I can go 100 times and see something different every time."

Randall's work capturing the grandest views and lesser known vistas of West Virginia's wildest places soon caught the attention of collectors and organizations looking to promote the state's natural beauty. Since taking up photography full-time he has become a juried fine art photographer at Tamarack in Beckley; was chosen to be a photographer in residence for the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge in 2010; became co-author and photographer for the multi-award-winning book, *West Virginia Waterfalls: The New River Gorge* (along with co-author Ed Rehbein); and even covered the 2013 National Scout Jamboree at Summit Bechtel Reserve.

After the success of his book, especially, Randall was finally able to focus on his work.

LEFT Randall Sanger has an eye for the perfect photo opportunity.

He also took up the cause of promoting preservation in the state. These days he actively helps nonprofits like the Birthplace of Rivers National Monument initiative and the West Virginia Nature Conservancy with their campaigns. He also teaches landscape photography workshops and holds private lessons in both the New River Gorge and Potomac Highlands.

For all his exploring, Randall has exposed as many intangible truths about the state as he has unnamed waterfalls and secret glades. "It's hard to say if there's ever anything truly undiscovered out there anymore, but I feel like we've found some gems," he says. "Sure, oftentimes we just came back muddy, wet, and disappointed. But we did find that sense of discovery out there. The sense that there's still something left to discover. We also hesitated. Some of these places we weren't sure we wanted to publicize. We thought, 'Do we want more people seeing this place and possibly trashing it?' But in the end we knew there are more good people than bad out there. And maybe this work could be part of promoting that beauty and protecting it."

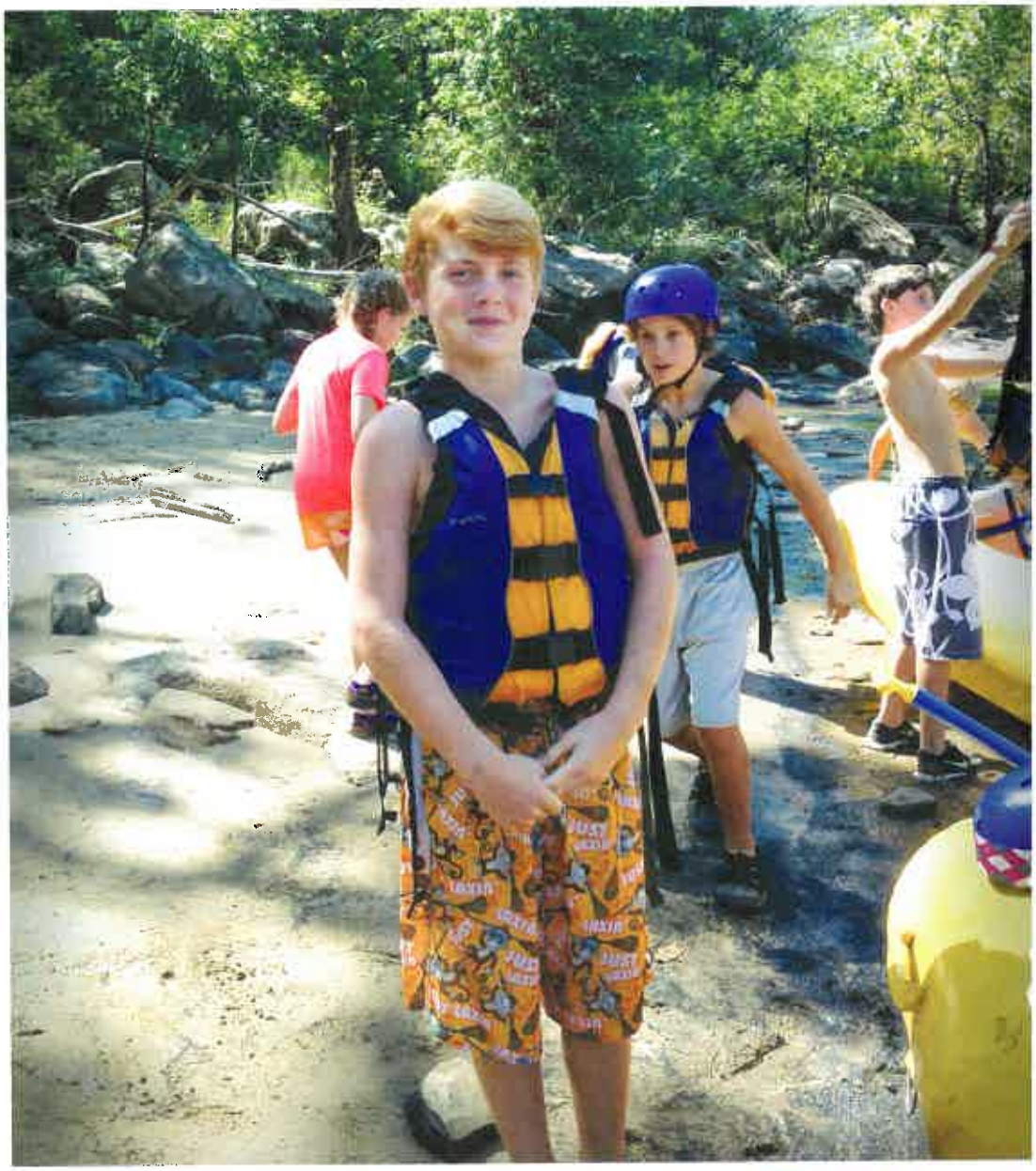
Randall's work can be found at Smokey's on the Gorge, Tamarack in Beckley, Buxton & Landstreet Gallery & Studios in Thomas, and at randallsanger.com.

written by MIKENNA PIEROTTI
photographed by RANDALL SANGER

Beauty Mountain offers some of the best views and most challenging rock climbing in the New River Gorge.

Beyond a Field Trip

West Virginia adventures make for an unforgettable experience for young school groups.



YOU'RE NEVER TOO YOUNG FOR ADVENTURE. For 16 years the K-12 independent Ensworth School has been taking its sixth graders to Adventures on the Gorge to explore, play, and learn in the wonders of the West Virginia wilderness.

More than 80 sixth grade students—all braces and ponytails and excitement—and about nine teachers travel by bus from Nashville, Tennessee, to Adventures on the Gorge in Fayette County once a year for a week of thrilling activity and discovery, where the kids are encouraged to step outside their comfort zones and undertake outdoor challenges as a team.

English teacher Brooks Corzine has been a chaperone on the trip for several years, and he appreciates the chance to see his own children enjoying the experience, too. "It's an invaluable opportunity for the kids," he says. "They learn how to push themselves, work together, and have fun being in different groups in the cabins and in the boats."

Science teacher and trip leader Mary Perkins says the adventure resort goes above and beyond to meet the school group's needs. "It's seamless when we put the trip together each year. They know what we need and will make accommodations from lodging to individual food allergies," she says. Mary stays in touch with the resort staff year-round and has become close with its team over the years. A lot has changed. "We have watched Adventures on the Gorge grow from a very small operation—with camping in tents—to a large operation with cabins, a paddling lodge, dining areas, stores, a pool, and hotel rooms. It's been exciting to see the growth and development over time."

The group's three-day trip centers around white water rafting on the Lower New River and flying, climbing, and walking high in the

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE A student waits for his riverside lunch. The school group listens to the TimberTrek safety speech. Kids goof off while they wait. Rafting down the Upper New is an unforgettable experience. Students learn to challenge themselves at TimberTrek Adventure Park. The kids love to jump rocks on the Upper New at New River Gorge.

sky as part of the TimberTrek Adventure Park. On the white water rafting adventure, students ride inflatable kayaks called duckies. On the first day they can go it alone or with a partner in the duckies, and on day two they climb aboard bigger rafts in groups. "Some of the kids are confident about being on the river, and some are anxious and not so confident," Brooks says. He says the resort's staff is kind and patient. "They really take great care of them." When taking a break from the water, the kids like to eat lunch on the river, swim, and jump from rocks into the water. Toward the end of the day they play games back in their cabins and regroup for an evening campfire. The weekend typically wraps up with an unforgettable obstacle course in the trees—the TimberTrek Adventure Park, with challenges from climbing to zip-lining. The grand finale is a surprise pool party.

The resort's Marketing Director PJ Stevenson has worked with the school since 2005 and says there is never a dull moment working with sixth graders. "They are at an interesting stage. There aren't the really strong cliques quite yet, so they are more willing to do things with other kids who might not be in their normal group of friends," she says. "By being in an environment that's totally outside their norm, some of those stereotypes get broken down. The cool kid becomes the one who knows what kind of bug is on a stump. They're also at an age where they understand the directions and how to do things on their own, so they can be more independent outdoors than younger ages might be able to."

Mary says the kids truly love the weekend trip—all of the activities, the great food, and the camaraderie. "The kids form some fun friendships with the guides at Adventures on the Gorge through the river activities and on the TimberTrek," she says. "They take such wonderful care of us as a group. It's an amazing experience for the kids and adults alike."

855.256.1230

written by DANIELLE CONAWAY
photos courtesy of ENSWORTH SCHOOL & ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE

Facilitating Fun

With top-notch facilities and staff, Adventures on the Gorge is the ultimate outdoor destination for college students.

ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE is flooded with college students seemingly year-round. Approximately 50 college groups visit the wild wonderland in Lansing, Fayette County, each season. That's about 3,000 students who arrive at the New River to form lasting memories and friendships as enduring as the ancient river itself.

Whether by land, water, or sky, Adventures on the Gorge offers an endless amount of options for the adventure seeker to get immersed in nature and have a new experience. The resort is perfect, really, for all ages, but millennials especially love it. "College groups are the perfect demographic for us here," says Steven Angerosa, director of sales. Whether it's fraternities, sororities, athletic teams, or educational clubs, he says, "They want to use their downtime and personal time to develop friendships. They look to go out and socialize while participating in adventurous endeavors, and that's where we come in."

At the adventure resort, young adults are encouraged to step outside their comfort zones. "When you take the time and effort to leave your daily environment and go to a new place, especially in a stimulating environment like what we have here, it brings the group together," Steven says.

The Ohio University Snowcats—a student organization on the Athens, Ohio, campus—has been coming to the resort for almost a decade. "We are our university's oldest ski and

The Lower Keeney Rapid is a great white water adventure at the New River Gorge. The OU college group gets a kick out of it and other rapids at Adventures on the Gorge each year.

snowboarding club," says Cam Tice, senior president of the Snowcats. "But we are also much more than that. We are a social club, with a goal to facilitate fun in any way possible." The group is always busy planning skiing and snowboarding trips across the country to outdoor destinations like Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and the snowy slopes in Colorado and Utah. But even with multiple exciting trips planned across the U.S. each year, the Snowcats' annual white water rafting trip is one of the most anticipated. Almost 100 students, alumni, and friends traveled to the resort in October 2014. "It's the only non-skiing trip we take because it's really the only one we see as worthwhile outside of our skiing and snowboarding," Cam says.

It's a short trip for the Snowcats compared to some of the group's weeklong adventures out West, but duration aside, the two-and-a-half-hour journey from Ohio to the gorge is worth it. "Weekend trips are a harder sell because people don't want to put down money on what seems like a single day's worth of activities," Cam says. However, he says the OU trip has grown by 500 percent, proving the students love it. "It's been a snowball effect since our first 20-person trip just a few years ago."

Steven says it's the dedication of the staff and guides that sets Adventures on the Gorge apart from other resorts in the region. "We have the legacy of hiring the best in the industry," he says. "Not only is our staff extremely skilled and well-versed in what they do, but they have devoted their lives to what they know. Groups will go down the river for the first time with a particular guide, and they make sure to schedule their return visit with the same guide." The Snowcats are no exception, and over the years they have developed close friendships with guides who Cam calls "unique and genuine," unlike at other places. He says their personalities fit with college-aged groups well. "They aren't uptight. They are there to make sure you have a good time," he says. "I remember a specific moment rafting when we came over this rapid and it felt like we were pointing straight in the air so everyone in the entire raft was freaking out. I looked back at our guide, and he was just loving it."

Overnight groups can choose from numerous packages to fit their budgets and needs. "We work with groups so they can enjoy their stay. We see what they really want to do and customize their itineraries," Steven says. Adventures on the Gorge offers tent rentals with great campsites, a wide selection of cabins with amenities like air conditioning and Wi-Fi, and even larger indoor facilities that can be used for meetings or other activities. The campsites and multi-person cabins have the communal component that fosters socialization just like a college atmosphere, so everyone can have a good time—without the worry of causing too much disruption. "They understand you're a college group, so they'll put you in a bigger campsite farther away from other campers. They like that we are a college group, so they don't try to strong-arm us into something else," Cam says.

Finally, perhaps the biggest selling point is the view. "Our location is the best of the best. We sit over the rim of the New River Gorge, right by the bridge itself," Steven says. With top-rated facilities, willing guides who promote fun and friendship, and staff who understand the needs and desires of young college groups, Adventures on the Gorge is the best in the business for students looking for a thrill. "It's definitely worth the money," Cam says. "The trips speak for themselves. It's a nice break from what we would do any other weekend." 855.255.1230

written by HOPE HART
photographed by WHITEWATER PHOTOGRAPHY

Brief Interviews with Amazing Guides

They're the people steering you through the rapid, coaxing you down the mountain, coaching you over the rough terrain. The guides at Adventures on the Gorge are a colorful group of nature lovers and adventure seekers who can't help but share their passion for the outdoors with others. We recently caught up with a few of AOTG's favorite guides to get to know them a little better.

JUSTINE JENKINS came to the New River Gorge in 2013 from southern California, where she grew up, by way of Nevada. There she met some administrators from Adventures on the Gorge on a rock climbing trip and was offered a job at as mountain bike guide on the spot. She'd never been to West Virginia before, but she said yes anyway. "It sounded like an awesome job," she says. She loved it so much she stayed in West Virginia and has been guiding mountain biking trips ever since.

How has being a guide changed the way you approach mountain biking? There's a huge difference. Every time I do it on my own now I've started to think about it in different terms. If I'm jumping over a log or doing some technical thing I break down the steps in my mind so I can be better at teaching it to somebody. I think about what I would have wanted to be told when I first started mountain biking, because I was terrified when I first started.

How did you get so good on a bike? I kept doing it with people who were way, way better than me. I would go out with this one friend who's a very skilled rider and ask him about stuff—if he was in a decent mood he'd answer my questions. And as I started doing it more I went from feeling like I was blindfolded and hoping for the best to feeling like I was in control. I think that makes me better at guiding now. It's like some people who are good at chemistry might not be so good at teaching people, because they're so good at chemistry they never had to work to figure out how it works. I was really horrible at biking, so I had to work to figure it out, and maybe I'm a good teacher because of that.

What's your favorite thing about being a guide? You can tell when someone gets frustrated about riding, but then something you say makes it click for them. And then maybe they get turned on to a sport that could be a huge part of their lives. It could be part of a healthy lifestyle and something they're psyched about for years. That's the coolest thing to me.

ne Jenkins has
leading moun-
biking excursions
2013.

MOUNTAIN BIKING
HALF-DAY ADVENTURE
DATES
May 1 - October 31
AGES
Must be at least 10 years old
PRICING
$79/person
855.255.1230
visitaotg.com

DOUG LUDWIG became a raft guide in 1997 when a friend suggested offhand that he should go through the training program. "I'd never been rafting a day in my life," Doug says. "I just thought it would be pretty cool to work outside and live outside. Back then I lived like a gypsy in the woods." In the 18 years since, Doug's life has changed a lot—he now lives indoors, in a house with his wife and kids—but he still spends every summer as a raft guide at the New River Gorge.

So what's so great about white water rafting? I think the reason we all like it so much is because the river makes you operate in the present, the here and the now. You can't sit around thinking about how you have to pick something up on your way home or how you had a fight with someone before you left the house. It really demands that you respect the moment.

When you've been guiding for a long time you don't have to overthink things, you just kind of react. It's like a baseball player fielding a ball—he automatically catches it and throws it to first

LEFT White water rafting guide Doug Ludwig says being out on the water is all about the here and now.

BELOW Sean Wishart shares his love of fishing and the New River.

phones, their vehicles, their refrigerators. We're taking them away from everything that's normal to them and everything out on the river is a very virgin experience. I try to make them comfortable by explaining everything to them—the more you explain the more comfortable people get, and the more comfortable they are the easier it is to take them to that very euphoric place.

SEAN WISHART first came to the New River Gorge in 1995 to work as a raft guide. He'd been rafting a few times, liked it, and figured he'd get trained to take people out on rafts. "I didn't know a lot about it, but I figured I'd give it a shot," he says. Before long Sean had fallen in love with the gorge and the New and Gauley rivers. When he realized he could get a job leading guided fishing trips to combine those things with his lifelong love of fishing, he was hooked. "The New River is just an incredible smallmouth bass fishery, and smallmouth bass are one of the most sought after freshwater fish in North America," he says. "It's pretty amazing."

Why did you become a guide? I fell in love with the river—the solitude, the beauty, just being out there and interacting with nature on a daily basis. I grew up fishing and hunting since I was a small child. After I learned how to navigate a white water river I evolved my career to become a fishing guide.

Do you feel like you have to help your guests catch a fish so they won't have a bad day on the river? As a guide, yes, it's our job to try to figure out how to make everybody's trip a success—we want people to have a good day. But the thing is that some of those days where they don't catch a lot of fish but have a good time, those can be just as good as catching 100 fish. It's not always about the fishing, it's about the trip and the experience and being out in nature.

What's made you continue to work as a guide all these years? A lot of that is the teaching aspect. I like passing on my knowledge of the outdoors, passing on my knowledge of fishing to other people, and especially to a younger generation.

written by SHAY MAUNZ
photos courtesy of ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE

SMALLMOUTH BASS

DATES
April 1 – October 31

AGES
Must be at least 8 years old

PRICING
$415/boat, full-day
$315/boat, half-hay

855.255.1230
visitaotg.com

base. We've done this so many times we automatically know what to do in any situation.

Does it ever get old, rafting day after day? No, it really doesn't. The water level changes every day. The people change every day. There's a lot of improv involved in being a raft guide.

What's your favorite thing about guiding? I like the people, and this is a wild ride with people. One day it can be bikers and one day it's Baptists. One day it's Boy Scouts and the next it's a bachelor party. You get to meet such a variety of people.

How do you approach each new trip? I try to remember that these people are out of their element. We're taking them away from their cell

Your Guide to the Gorge

The Canyon Rim Visitor Center offers more than just a great view of the gorge.

THE NEW RIVER GORGE IS BIG—the national park encompasses some 70,000 acres of mountains, valleys, and water, all teeming with wildlife. Even if you think you know the gorge, you might need some help navigating it all. Or maybe you're just passing through the area and want a quick introduction to the wonders of the gorge. "I think we fill both roles," says Billy Strasser, a park ranger at the New River Gorge National River who works at the Canyon Rim Visitor Center. "We have everything from that visitor who is just stopping in to use the bathroom but wants to know more about the area to the visitor who is coming here to hike, bike, raft, or walk a trail. It's a mix, and we're prepared for all of it."

The National Park Service operates four visitor centers at the New River Gorge, but the Canyon Rim Visitor Center is the most popular—last year more than 300,000 visitors passed through it—with the most attractions and amenities. It boasts two lookout spots with breathtaking views of the New River Gorge Bridge—one that requires visitors take a quick hike down, then back up, 178 stairs, and another that sits just behind the center and is handicap accessible. There's an exhibit room filled with a robust display of photographs and exhibits detailing the history of the gorge, complete with films explaining the construction of the New River Gorge Bridge, and the natural forces that created the gorge itself.

Plus, the visitor center is staffed with a team of people who can answer practically every question you might have about the gorge, give directions, and offer recommendations, making it the perfect launch pad for a week, day, or hour at the gorge. "What we do is important

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT A permanent exhibit inside the Canyon Rim Visitor Center tells of the region's industry. Get a picture-perfect view of the New River Gorge Bridge from one of the center's two overlooks. The main lookout is quite a trek—down 178 stairs.

because you need a destination to orient visitors to help them understand the place," Billy says. "It's like if I went to spend a week in New York City and showed up and said 'Where do I get a hotel? How do I get places? What should I do?' It would be totally overwhelming and scary. But if I looked into it in advance and somebody handed me a guidebook then I could have a good experience and come away from the trip with a good idea of what that place is about. That's what we're trying to do." The Canyon Rim Visitor Center also offers special programs throughout the year, from children's activities and Appalachian films to guided hikes. Topographic maps and a large selection of books on history, nature, and recreation are for sale—proceeds benefit the park.

Once you've checked out the Canyon Rim center, you might also consider the three other National Park Service visitor centers at the New River Gorge, for an even more comprehensive education on the area. The Sandstone Visitor Center sits just off of Interstate 64 and serves the southern part of the gorge with a series of interactive exhibits. The Thurmond Depot is the perfect place to learn about the tiny ghost town that was a booming railroad town during the first two decades of the 20th century. And the Grandview Visitor Center introduces visitors to the Grandview section of the park, with its sweeping views of the gorge and famous clusters of rhododendron bush. "Our goal is for people to have a good experience when they come in here, and then to steer them in a direction so they can go outside, do more, and have a good experience," Billy says. "There are so many awesome places on the gorge. Hopefully we can help people see more of them."

The Canyon Rim Visitor center is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Hours at the other visitor centers vary; for information visit nps.gov/neri. [illegible] enter Road. [illegible]

written by SHAY MAUNZ
photographed by LAURA WILLCOX ROTE

COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

A LIFE ON THE RIVER

Meet Trish Kicklighter, the National Park Service's top dog at the gorge.

TRISH KICKLIGHTER first came to the New River Gorge in 2013, but she's no stranger to rivers.

Now the superintendent of the New River Gorge National River and the associated Gauley River National Recreation Area and Bluestone National Scenic River, Trish is originally from Missouri. Her family owned a swath of land that was bought by the government in the 1960s to become part of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways. She spent her childhood summers paddling the river with her family, and she fell in love with the sense of peace she felt there. "The river has a rhythm of its own, and when you're on it you become a part of that rhythm," she says. "When you're on a river you get to move through an ecosystem as part of it. It's kind of like you're a secret witness to everything that normally happens along a river."

The National Park Service loomed larger in Trish's childhood than it does for most people. That was partly because of her family's experience with the national park in the Ozarks, but also because of television—when she was a kid Trish watched a lot of *Lassie* (for a few seasons the dog's owner was a park ranger) and *Flipper* (the dolphin's companion is the warden at a marine preserve), plus another short-lived show called *The Forest Rangers*. "I just thought that was the coolest job as a young kid," she says. "I knew from the time I was a very little kid that that's what I wanted to do."

When she graduated college with a degree in wildlife conservation and management, she went to work at the Ozark National Scenic Riverways as an interpreter, canoeing down the river several times a week, talking with visitors and helping them travel the river safely. Over the last three decades Trish has worked her way through the ranks at the National Park Service and been assigned to a broad range of interesting parks. After starting her career in the diverse terrain of Missouri's Ozarks, she moved on to work on a tiny peninsula off the coast of California and in the rolling hills of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, among other places. She was drawn to apply for her job at the New River Gorge partly because it felt like a homecoming—West Virginia is far from Missouri, but the peace she finds on the river is the same. "It reminds me a lot of home," she says.

My World-Class Adventure

A global quest inspiring readers to get outdoors leads an adventure travel writer to Adventures on the Gorge.

THERE ARE MOMENTS that defy all logic and reasoning, yet fuel the thread we call adventure by pitting heart-pounding adrenaline against stone cold fear. It is what I feel as I stare down the mouth of a 20-foot drop into a Class V rapid on the Upper Gauley River. The cauldron of water is churning in both directions, rocks taunt my raft from both sides of the banks, and another fierce rapid waits on the other side. This is the last day of Gauley season when the water is at its roughest, coldest, and most unforgiving of the year. There is barely time to take a breath.

"Forward left, forward left, back right, back right," shouts my guide. The seconds we spend tossing in the belly of the rapid seem like hours. In this moment, we have no idea how it will end. Will the boat flip? Will we fall out? Will we regret this moment or embrace it?

It is hard to believe that just a minute ago my boat mates and I were enjoying a leisurely drift in slower waters, sharing stories of our hometowns and laughing at the colorful nature of our expert guide known to us only as Ray Ray. But things change fast on the Upper Gauley. Ray Ray's playful demeanor instantly pivots to determination upon approaching rapids. We endure this pattern of calm and storm for 12 miles along the Gauley. In the end, we are all changed for the better because of the incredible and challenging experience.

BELOW Anietra Hamper tries rock climbing at Summersville Lake.

While tackling the Upper Gauley is not for the faint of heart, completing the most daring white water rafting trip with Adventures on the Gorge is like stamping a personal passport. Having also rafted the Lower Gauley, the Lower New River, and the Upper New River over the years, this was not just a test of endurance; it was further confirmation of an outdoor adventure I love.

As an outdoor adventure writer for my own blog at ThreeWordPress and dozens of magazines, I literally search the world for the most unique, extreme, and enjoyable outdoor adventures. I have walked on glaciers in Iceland and gone fishing at castles in Ireland, but I have also discovered that I don't have to go far to find world-class adventure. Through the number of experiences offered at Adventures on the Gorge and the varied skill levels available, there is profound opportunity for guests like me to go wild.

Every time I come to Adventures on the Gorge I try something new, as there are dozens of fresh experiences ready for the taking. As an avid angler, I was eager to try fishing in the New River, consistently rated as one of the top rivers in the U.S. for catching smallmouth bass. On this journey, my guide Sean Wishart escorts me on a half-day float trip. He carefully navigates our raft along the river as we pass through small rapids. Sean holds the boat steady as I cast from the left and from the right into small eddies prime for smallmouth bass. Having spent nearly 20 years as a guide on the New River, Sean knows how the water temperature and recent rains will impact where the fish are hiding. The breathtaking scenery is only a bonus to the nine smallmouth bass that I landed with my successful day on water.

In addition to the incredible number of outdoor experiences, Adventures on the Gorge offers activities at many varied skill levels. This is essential. If you attempt an adventure that is too advanced, you may never try it again. If you have never been rafting before, the Upper Gauley—which was truly one of the most terrifying and thrilling experiences of my life—should not be your first trip, for instance. I worked my way up to that level, having rafted on many trips prior. Adventures on the Gorge is top-notch when it comes to assessing guests and recommending trips based on individual skill level and experience.

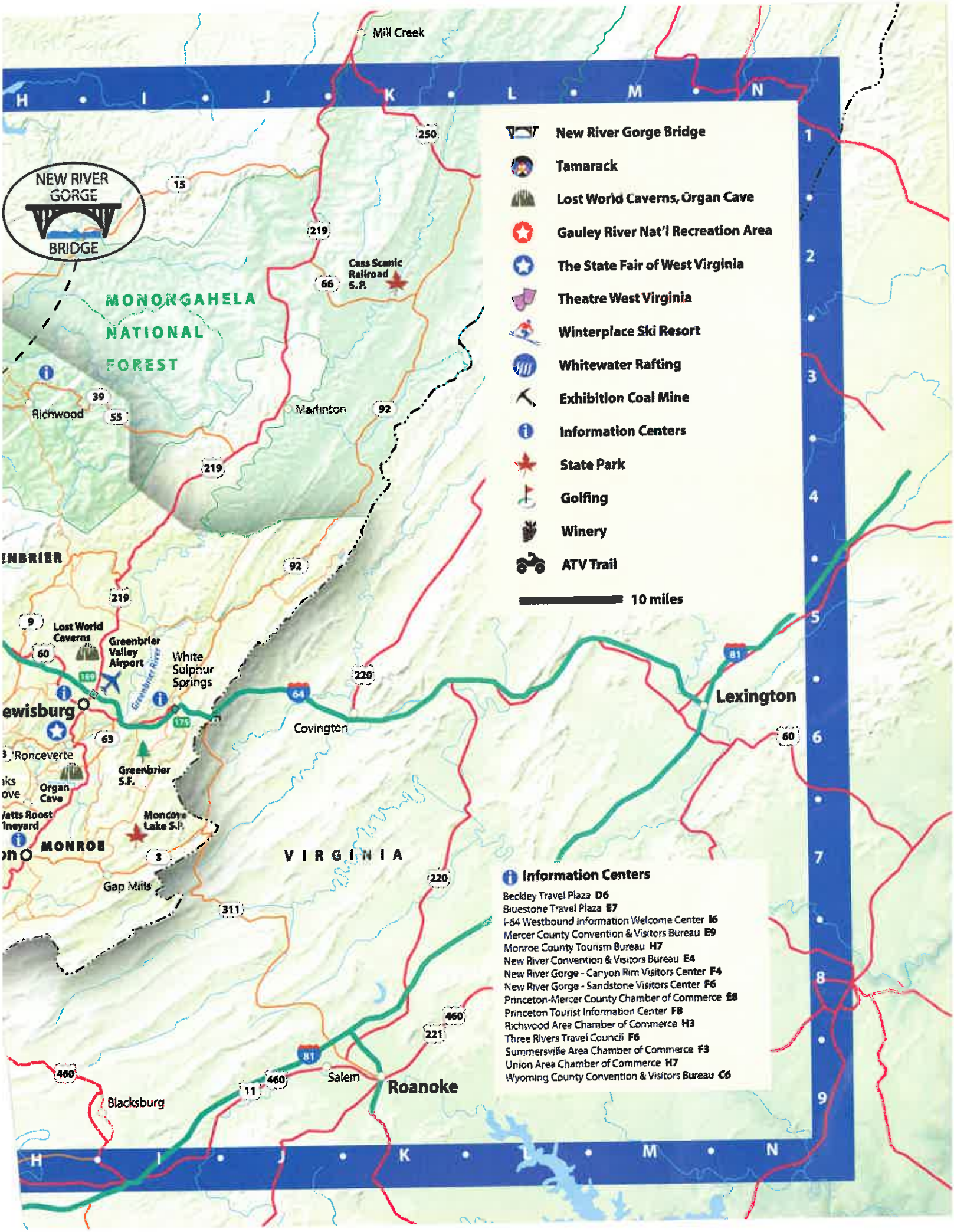
There is further evidence of this as I register to try rock climbing. Not the indoor kind, but the real, get your hands dirty and hang on the side of a cliff kind. The guides at Adventures on the Gorge introduce me to this new sport at a comfortable pace. With harnesses and detailed instruction, I find my way safely to the side of a cliff at Summersville Lake. "OK, grab the small ledge just above your hand and push your toe into the small crevice where your right knee is now," explains my guide, who has me tethered from below. Step by step, he guides me through an exhausting journey that ends with exhilaration when I finally reach the top. There is something wonderful about braving a new experience—it builds confidence and a deeper appreciation for the outdoors.

I tackled so much in one weekend at Adventures on the Gorge: white water rafting, fishing, a bridge walk 851 feet above the New River Gorge, hiking, and zip-lining—including one of the longest, most breathtaking zip lines in the United States. But what truly made these adventures memorable were the people surrounding them. The attention to safety is evident as they measure the comfort level of every participant in every activity, ensuring a positive experience. It is this commitment to the guest experience that enables people like me to crave even more advanced and new adventures next time. The people, the adventures, and the sincerity to share the outdoors in so many incredible ways are what make this adventure resort truly world-class.

Anietra Hamper is an award-winning adventure travel writer from Columbus, Ohio. threewordpress.com

written by ANIETRA HAMPER
photo courtesy of ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE

PLAN YOUR NEW RIVER GORGE GETAWAY!


New River Gorge Bridge
Tamarack
Lost World Caverns, Organ Cave
Gauley River Nat'l Recreation Area
The State Fair of West Virginia
Theatre West Virginia
Winterplace Ski Resort
Whitewater Rafting
Exhibition Coal Mine
Information Centers
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Golfing
Winery
ATV Trail
10 miles
NEW RIVER GORGE BRIDGE
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Marlinton
Lost World Caverns
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Greenbrier River
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Covington
VIRGINIA
Lexington
Salem
Roanoke
Blacksburg
Information Centers
Beckley Travel Plaza D6
Bluestone Travel Plaza E7
I-64 Westbound Information Welcome Center I6
Mercer County Convention & Visitors Bureau E9
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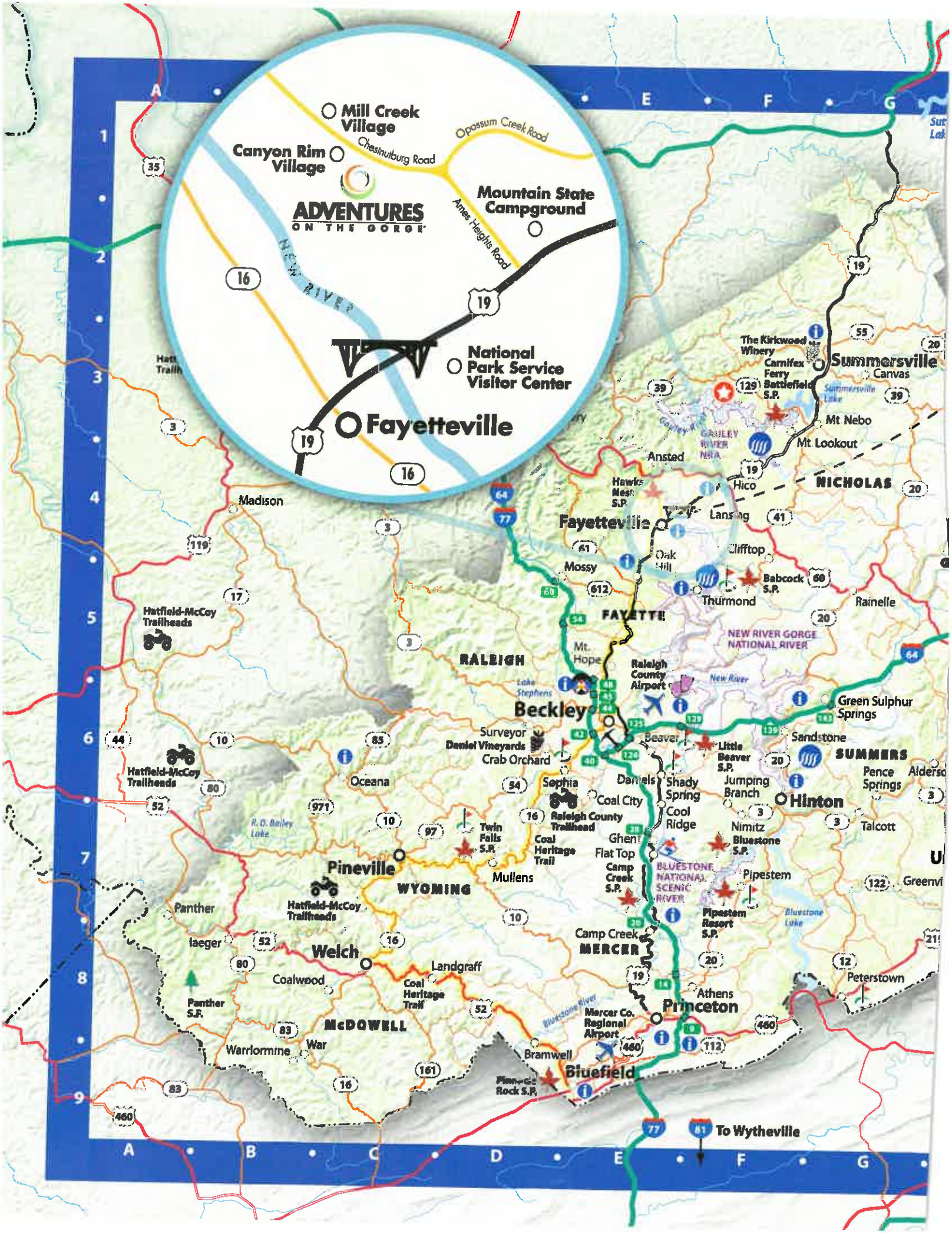
Richwood Area Chamber of Commerce H3
Three Rivers Travel Council F6
Summersville Area Chamber of Commerce F3
Union Area Chamber of Commerce H7
Wyoming County Convention & Visitors Bureau C6


Mill Creek Village
Canyon Rim Village
Chestnutburg Road
Opossum Creek Road
ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE
Mountain State Campground
Ames Heights Road
NEW RIVER
National Park Service Visitor Center
Fayetteville
Summersville
The Kirkwood Winery
Carnifex Ferry Battlefield S.P.
Canvas
Mt. Nebo
Mt. Lookout
Ansted
Hico
NICHOLAS
Hawks Nest S.P.
Lansing
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FAYETTE
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Mt. Hope
Raleigh County Airport
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THE FEEDBACK SAYS IT ALL

TRIPADVISOR PROVIDES THE PERFECT OUTLET FOR GUESTS TO SHARE THEIR TRUE FEELINGS ABOUT ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE

LOWER NEW RIVER RAFTING

LOVED AOTG!
ABLAIR02 FROM FLORIDA

"After much research we decided to book a trip to Adventures on the Gorge. We stayed in the Sunnyside Cabin Suites for four nights (three people with two queen beds). The cabin exceeded our expectations and was an excellent option for someone who wants the comforts of home, but doesn't need a full-size cabin. We did TreeTops Canopy Tour and also Gravity Zip Lines. Both were a lot of fun and we had excellent guides for both trips. We also did a full day Lower New River rafting trip we had a great time on. Everything is top-notch and I was very impressed by the grounds and amenities offered. All of the staff members we interacted with were helpful and friendly. We will definitely be returning."

WONDERFUL FIVE-DAY VACATION
NWRAFTING FROM OREGON

"We stayed at Adventures on the Gorge for five days last week and had a wonderful time. The cabins are great and the restaurants are all wonderful. The best part was the two day rafting trip we did on the Gauley River with kind guides and simply amazing food at their private campground along the Gauley River. We also did a zip line tour, which was a nice addition to our vacation. If you're looking for a getaway, this is such a nice place to go and relax or for an active vacation."

SPECTACULAR
DIANEMARIEAVERY FROM NEW JERSEY

"My sisters and I rented a luxurious cabin.... and it was just that. Down to earth, comfortable, everything you could want, even a hot tub (which was perfect after our full day of rafting and zip lining!). Our guides were the best. Shout out to Doug, Guido, Mr. S, and Nighthawk!"

SO MUCH FUN
JAMESCUNNINGHAM23 FROM UNITED KINGDOM

"This place was the highlight of a two-week trip I did around the United States. It has everything. White water rafting was mainly what we did with our guide, Corbin, who was awesome. We had a blast; everyone was friendly. The campsite was well-equipped. The shop was cool. Just everything was great."

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Mike Thompson
Kennedy's living-liver donor
Age 39

It takes a big heart to donate part of your liver.

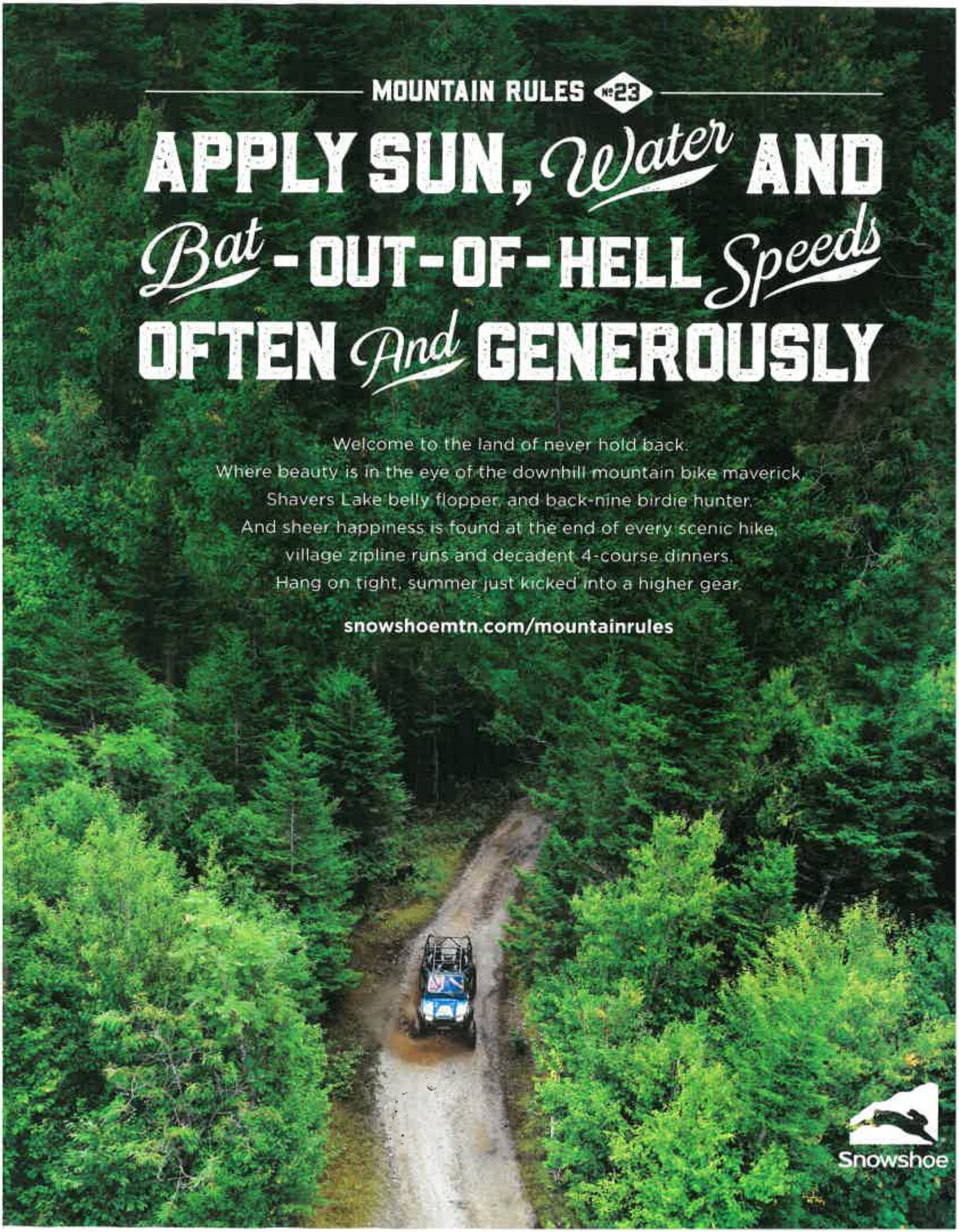
Become a living donor to a child who needs a new liver.

Kennedy Stevenson
Liver recipient
Age 6

It's always hard for kids to wait. But when a child is waiting for a lifesaving liver transplant, the wait is even more difficult. However, for the more than 30 kids who are on Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC's liver waiting list, there's another option: living donation. This is when a part of an adult liver is transplanted into a child. The adult's liver grows back, while the child can go on to live a healthy life. We are on a mission to find donors for these children and to save lives through living donation. Donors are carefully screened and not everyone is eligible. So spread the word and please consider being a living donor to a child. You'll leave a legacy. And you'll save a life. Visit UPMC.com/BeADonor.

Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh | of UPMC

DONATE LIFE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wvliving
VOLUME 11 · ISSUE 2

Summer 2018

features

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The Good Zoo at Oglebay Resort isn't just taking care of animals—it's training a new generation of zookeepers.

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Your guide to Corridor H, a stretch of highway offering beautiful vistas and amazing stops at almost every turn.

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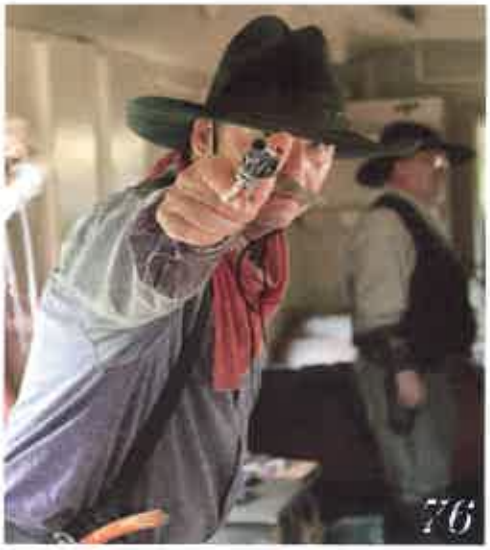
Corridor D-Light
Corridor D offers a trip through West Virginia's railway history—and a chance to discover hidden treasures.



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ON THE COVER

Pack up your pickup for fun on the river or the road. *Photo by Carla Witt Ford*

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It's time to hit the road with our summer road trip issue—and take *WV Living* magazine with you when you do! Traveling Route 50? Then check out all of the small towns along the way. You'll find a surprise at every turn. If you haven't been on Corridor H, now's the time. It is a beautiful scenic drive, and we take you from Weston to Wardensville. And how about the Ohio River Valley? Moundsville and New Martinsville are only about 25 miles apart and offer a wide range of attractions. Don't just drive through a town. Get out of the car. Eat at a diner or a dive. Take a walk. Ride a bike. Paddle a canoe. Just do.

I've spent the past couple of months putting some wear on my tires. Here are a few of my favorite photos from places I've recently visited with some of my favorite people. Follow me on Instagram at @thewveditor to see more photos of beautiful places around the state.

So no excuses. Hit the road. Make SUMMER a verb!

Nikki

NIKKI BOWMAN, *Editor*

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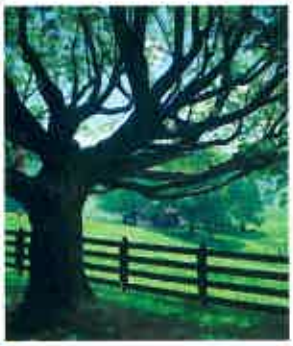

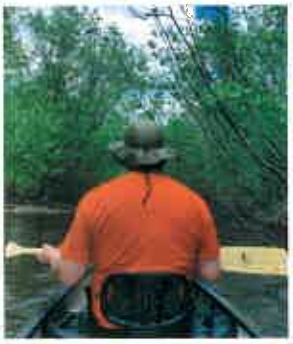

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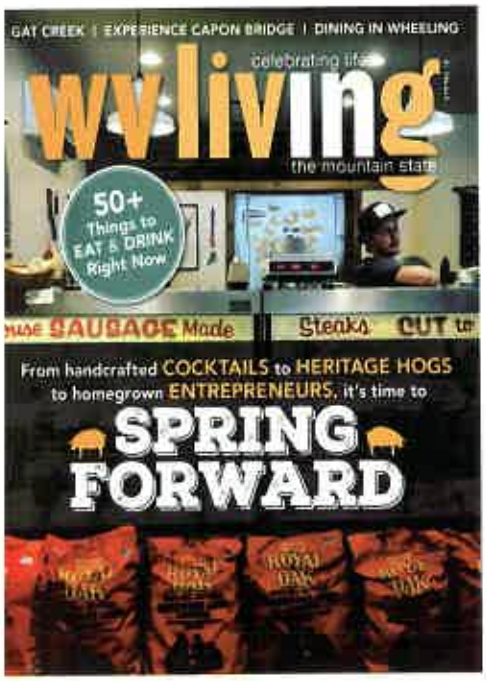

Trust Us, We're Professionals

If you don't already receive *WV Living* magazine, get a subscription! It showcases our state in a very professional manner. GLORIA MCKEE, *via Facebook*

Pulling for the Home Team

I am so proud to be a West Virginian, born and raised—though living on the South Shore of Boston. I go out of my way to extol the wonderful virtues of the state of West Virginia to those who will listen (and even those who won't). I left the state when I was in my early twenties way back in the '60s. I left for two reasons: to see what was "on the other side of the mountain," and I really didn't want to compete with all my friends in Charleston.

Kudos to you all for your Struggle to Stay campaign. It's been interesting and, at times, rather sad to follow the feedback. The fact you are following it with a campaign of positivity is beyond reproach. I realize it may be easier to look from the outside in sometimes, but the state, towns, local communities, and so many individuals have so much to offer if one only looks for it. I hope and pray others realize those opportunities and will act upon those realities. I wish you all, and the state, much continued success.

Your spring issue is too good to be true. Makes one even prouder to be from West Virginia. Thank you! HENRY TALLMAN, *via email*

Here by Choice

Nikki, I really liked your editorial about West Virginia, and Alex Reneman's quote: "I'm not here by apology. I'm here by choice." My wife and I recently moved to Parkersburg from Texas. We love it here. The people, the beautiful landscape, and the opportunity to help make our new home a great place to be. We are here to stay. STEVE ALTMILLER, CAMDEN CLARK MEDICAL PRESIDENT AND CEO, *via mail*

"Great magazine! Love all *the fun things I learn* with each issue."

BETH SCOTT BEDNAREK, *via Facebook*

A Bridge Not Far

Thanks for exposing Capon Bridge to *WV Living* readers ("Reduce Speed Ahead," Spring '18). We invite you all to click on *VisitCaponBridge.com* for new events and plan a trip soon. *TheRiverHouseWV.org* will be celebrating their first year this June. SUSAN FELLER, *via wvliving.com*

Tree to Table

Zack did a fantastic job on the Gat Creek article ("Roots Run Deep," Spring '18). I like to call it a great "tree to table" story. *WV Living* portrays the state beautifully and continues to inspire me to travel and do more myself. GAT CAPERTON, GAT CREEK AND CEO, *via email*

Let us hear from you. We want to know what you think about the magazine, and we'd love to hear your suggestions.

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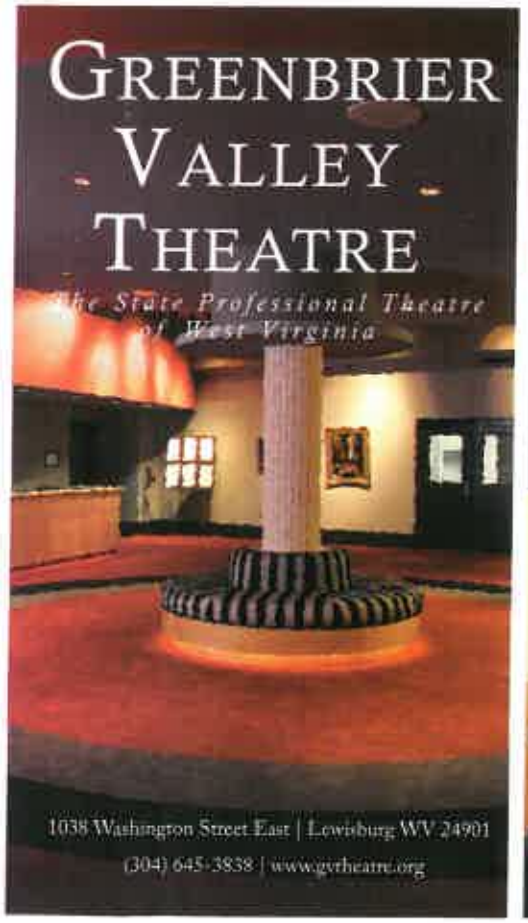

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the mountain state

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The weather's warm and the days are long. You've got plenty of time find a new adventure. Get going.

PICTURED: ETHAN BOWMAN AND ELLIE TAKE A WALK IN TUCKER COUNTY.

NIKKI BOWMAN

ARTIST

Craftsman's Tools

Matt Wilkinson makes life-size, fully functional carvings of hand tools.

MATT WILKINSON'S ARTISTIC CAREER started with an 18-inch Rigid pipe wrench.

It was 30 years ago. He had just gotten a job with the gas company and spent his days with a field crew, digging ditches to install or repair gas lines. One day, his eyes fell on that wrench, one of the tools of his trade. "I thought, I could probably make that," Wilkinson says.

So he did. With a pocketknife in one hand and a chunk of walnut in the other, he fashioned a full-scale, fully functional replica of the tool. He took it to the state fair, entered it in the fine arts and crafts competition, and took home first place in his division.

Wilkinson realized the possibilities for his newfound medium were endless and set about making more wooden tools. Working from his garage workshop at his home in Ashford, in Boone County, he has made wrenches of various sizes and designs, a caulking gun, channel locks, chains, drills, planes, pliers, pocket knives, saws, screwdrivers, squares, and more, all produced with the same painstaking accuracy.

His wrenches appear to be embossed with brand names and numbers, but he creates these details with tiny screwdrivers he has sharpened into chisels. His hacksaw blades have fine, sharp teeth—the result of hours of meticulous work with a tiny file. Lay one of Wilkinson's carvings side-by-side with the original, and it's only the wood grain that gives the imposter away. The copies are so accurate, he can replace any of the pieces from the original tools with his carved copies.

But to truly appreciate Wilkinson's work, one must see it in action. Crank the handle on his butternut bottle jack, and the jack begins to rise. That's thanks to the handmade wooden valve hidden inside, which fills the chamber with mineral oil.

For years, Wilkinson mostly shared his work with family and friends. At their urging, he submitted his work to Tamarack in 2016. The jury accepted his work into its collection. Then, in July 2017, Wilkinson submitted a carving of a Stihl chainsaw—complete with a lifelike chain, ripcord, and removable part covers—to Tamarack's Best of West Virginia Open Juried Exhibition. The piece won the competition's People's Choice Award. After that, Tamarack gave Wilkinson a permanent display.

He spent the winter completing a piece for this July's Best of West Virginia exhibition, his biggest carving yet—a jackhammer, crafted from holly, walnut, and butternut, propped up in a base made from a crosscut cedar stump. But he has already moved on to his next project, a re-creation of an antique hand drill. "It is complicated, but that's what I enjoy about it," he says. "The more complicated, the better."

written and photographed by ZACK HAROLD

COUNTRY ROADS

Day Trippin'

You don't need a week off work to find serious family adventure. Check out these destinations, located within an easy day's drive of almost anywhere in West Virginia.

WORKIN' IN A COAL MINE

For a closer look at West Virginia's history—both aboveground and below—check out the Exhibition Coal Mine. A longtime favorite of school field trips, this museum features a restored early 20th century coal camp, with a church, school, typical miner's home, and mine superintendent's home. The main attraction, of course, is the mine itself. Former coal miners will give your family a glimpse of what it's like to work in the dark, dank, and dangerous heart of a mountain. *513 Ewart Avenue, Beckley, 304. 256.1747, beckley.org/exhibition_coal_mine*

DOWN ON THE FARM

The collection at Heritage Farm Museum and Village is spread among 16 buildings. Favorites include the Progress Museum, which shows the dramatic changes in home life from the late 1800s through the early decades of the 1900s, and the Transportation Museum, which showcases the history of travel from covered wagons and carriages to early automobiles. *3300 Harvey Road, Huntington; 304.522.1244, heritagefarmmuseum.com*

LOOK OUT BELOW

The Smoke Hole Caverns and Log Cabin Resort centers around a beautiful system of caves, allegedly used as a hiding place for moonshiners during the heyday of Prohibition. The resort includes a log motel, private log cabins for couples and families, and cottages along the river. There's also Smoke Hole Outfitters, which offers fly fishing lessons, a catch-and-release trout stream, and a catch-and-keep pond. *8290 North Fork Highway, Cabins, 800.828.8478, smokehole.com*

GO WILD

Located about 30 minutes from Stonewall Resort, the West Virginia State Wildlife Center allows your family to get face-to-face with coyotes, elk, mountain lions, river otters, timber wolves, and white-tailed deer, and many more of the state's native critters, all in a modern zoo facility. *163 County Route 20, French Creek, 304.924.6211, wvdnr.gov/wildlife/wildlifecenter.shtm*

GOOD NEWS

Over Troubled Waters

Volunteers rebuild essential bridges destroyed by flooding.

WHEN FLOODWATERS WASHED HER BRIDGE AWAY in March 2015, Ruth Cornell drained her bank account to have it built back. Just weeks after the new bridge was finished, another flood came and washed it out. Cornell had exhausted her savings, so she took out a loan to build another bridge. Then, in July 2015, that third bridge washed out, too. Deep in debt with no money in the bank, the 82-year-old retired West Virginia history teacher resorted to crossing her creek on two wobbling boards.

Then West Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (WV VOAD) stepped in.

While there are resources for families whose houses are affected by floods, there's next to nothing to help homeowners replace flood-damaged bridges. So, in 2015, WV VOAD launched its "Bridging the Gap" program to meet those needs.

Unlike homemade spans, which are often designed around culverts that can get stopped up and lead to more flooding, WV VOAD's bridges are engineered to withstand high waters and bear a maximum load of seven-and-a-half tons—more than enough to hold a large household truck or SUV. Yet they are simple enough to be built by groups of volunteer laborers.

A typical WV VOAD bridge costs $16,000, much less than it would cost a typical homeowner, thanks to discounts from vendors and volunteer labor from groups like the American Baptist Men, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, and the Mennonite Disaster Service. If they have the means, WV VOAD asks families to contribute money to the projects. Many times, this comes from the FEMA funding they receive after a disaster. But for those who cannot contribute monetarily, the bridge still gets built.

WV VOAD reached out to Ruth Cornell as soon as they heard about her situation. "The first thing she said was 'How much?'" says executive director Jenny Gannaway. When Gannaway explained it was free, Cornell was still skeptical. "On the day we dedicated the bridge she said 'I never thought this would happen,'" Gannaway says.

The group has now completed 56 bridges, but there are many more people in need of help, from both the 2015 floods and extreme weather that has occurred since then. "We don't know where funding for the next 50 bridges is coming from," Gannaway says. Of course, they didn't know where funding for the first 50 would come from, either. That hasn't stopped WV VOAD yet. *wvvoad.org*

written and photographed by ZACK HAROLD

FAMILY FUN

All Aboard!

This Harpers Ferry attraction has been hauling railfans for generations.

CHRIS WALLICH'S FATHER, ROBERT, started collecting toy trains as a boy in the early part of the 20th century. By the time he had children of his own, he had amassed a huge collection of Lionel engines and cars from the 1910s through the 1930s. But Robert Wallich was not content with keeping his treasures to himself. "He wanted people to share the love of trains like he did," Wallich says. So, in 1968, he started a museum in the basement of his Harpers Ferry home.

A few years later, Robert Wallich decided to give his Harpers Ferry Toy Train Museum a home of its own, and purchased a decommissioned Western Maryland baggage car. He moved that car—and his family—to a farmhouse on Bakerton Road. He installed 75 feet of toy train track inside the baggage car, looping it across bridges and through tunnels. "It's trains that you won't see anymore. These are big metal trains," Wallich says. "They still operate. That's how well they were built."

Robert Wallich also laid a half mile loop of track near the baggage car for his collection of amusement park trains. "We used to buy them as junk, essentially. The parks were just closing down and wanted to get rid of them. That's how the Joy Line got started."

The Joy Line boasts three running locomotives, 10 passenger cars, three freight cars, a snow plow, a caboose, and a handcar that kids can crank around the track. Wallich took over the railroad after his father died in 1990, and now he, his wife, Donna, and nephew Aaron make sure the trains run on time.

They entertain occasional day care and school groups during the week but open to the public on weekends. The museum and railroad also get lots of visitors from Baltimore, Maryland, as well as Washington, D.C., where many embassies recommend Wallich's place to visiting dignitaries. "We've had people from Germany, Japan, all over. A lot of folks from India come here," he says. "Everybody has a good time."

But the most faithful customers are the locals, some of whom have been visiting the Wallich farm for three generations. "We have kids that come here almost every weekend. From what I gather, it's a bribe. If the kids are good and do their homework, they get to come up."

It's good clean family fun, and affordable too. A ride on the train costs just $2 per passenger. "We always kept the price down for our local folks," Wallich says.

The Harpers Ferry Toy Train Museum & Joy Line Railroad is open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays from mid-April to October, weather permitting.
933 Bakerton Road, 304.535.2521, "Harpers Ferry Toy Train Museum & Joy Line Railroad" on Facebook

written by **ZACK HAROLD**

photographed by **CARLA WITT FORD**

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Although advanced paddleboarders often take to West Virginia's rivers, beginners can get a taste of the sport on calm lake waters.

COURTESY OF ADVENTURES ON THE GORGE

ADVENTURE

SUP, Dude?

Stand-up paddleboarding rides a wave of enthusiasm in the Mountain State.

IT'S NOT CLEAR HOW stand-up paddleboarding, or SUP, made its way from tropical Hawaii to our own snaking rivers and mountainous backdrops. But "hoe he'e nalu," as the sport is known in its home state, is now on the menu at most adventure-driven resorts in the state.

Melanie Seiler, executive director of Active Southern West Virginia, has been behind the movement from the start here. "It's really been growing for the last seven or eight years," Seiler says. "This is just a great place to do it. West Virginia has so many rivers and lakes. It's easy in having that access to try it out for the first time." Paddleboarding is a great way for all kinds of athletes, from mountain-bikers to skiers, to cross-train and keep up their balance and strength.

Seiler says newcomers are often surprised to find the sport much easier than anticipated. Getting started is simple: all you need is a paddleboard, a paddle, a life jacket, and most importantly, confidence. And those who need a little extra time to build confidence can begin paddling on their knees.

As a paddleboarding guide, Seiler has seen customers of every age and background tackle the sport. Like any sport, paddleboarding has its extreme athletes—Seiler has even organized paddleboarding races for the more competitive enthusiasts. But there are plenty of paddlers who just want a scenic trip in the valley. The activity also makes for great, low-impact exercise for seniors. "We see more and more come out. It helps to build core muscles and provides cardio without being too physically challenging for them."

written by ANDY SMITH

West Virginia's Top SUP Spots

Lakes

- ✓ **Summersville Lake** "West Virginia's largest lake is so pristine, is great in the summer, and has great climbing access," Seiler says.
- ✓ **Stonewall Jackson Lake**
- ✓ **Lake Stevens** "This smaller, unknown lake west of Beckley in Raleigh County stays clean and clear year-round."

Rivers

- ✓ **New River,** Teays take-out to Hawks Nest Lake
- ✓ **Upper Cheat River Water Trail** "You have to hit the Cheat in spring and early summer to catch the good flows," Seiler says.
- ✓ **Upper New River,** Glade Creek to Grandview "This is a great four-mile section getting into class II whitewater."
- ✓ **Middle Gauley,** Sweets Falls to Masons Branch
- ✓ **Upper New River,** Stonecliff to Cunard "This run is a bit longer at around eight miles in distance, and includes class II whitewater."

Surf Spots

- ✓ **Gauley River,** Diagonal Ledges and The Perfect Wave
- ✓ **New River,** New River Dries during spring high water

WEIRD, WONDERFUL WV

Rest Stop, Best Stop

Don't pass up the Sandstone Visitor Center.

AS WEST VIRGINIANS, we often think of our visitors centers as mere pitstops on our way to other places. But the National Park Service's tiny Sandstone Visitor Center, located just north of the Interstate 64 and West Virginia Route 20 interchange near the Hinton exit, is a destination unto itself. It's a great resource for learning more about the southern portion of the New River Gorge National River watershed.

The Sandstone Visitor Center was built using sustainable design principles. Even the outdoor landscaping uses native grasses and wildflowers. In fact, the visitors' center is a registered monarch butterfly waystation. The center's walls and floor offer interesting interactive and interpretive displays—you can follow the river from one destination to another. There's also a wonderful shop operated by Eastern National, a nonprofit that gives its proceeds back to the park, stocked with a wide range of publications specific to the park and surrounding area.

Don't be surprised if your quick pit stop turns into a 30-minute break. *nps.gov/neri/planyourvisit*

written by NIKKI BOWMAN

SOMETHING NEW

Hops and Dreams

A Marion County hop grower says demand is frothing over.

WHAT'S BETTER THAN A WEST VIRGINIA–BREWED CRAFT BEER? One made with West Virginia–grown hops, of course. James Lewis's Spring Water Farms in Marion County is making it possible.

By day, Lewis teaches physics at West Virginia University. But at home, he has 100 acres to manage. He wanted an alternative to cows and, six years ago, started growing hops. "The climate here is very similar to the climate in Germany and the Czech Republic, so I thought, 'I bet you we can grow hops here,'" he says. "I started it as a trial and, about four years ago, we started selling our hops."

Hop vines, called "bines," produce flowers shaped like small, soft cones. Added to a brewing beer, fresh or preserved hop flowers balance the sweet malt with bitterness and, sometimes, a citrusy character, and add a floral aroma. They also help preserve beer.

Hops are easy to grow, Lewis says. In spring, the grower plants rhizomes, or underground stems, in hilled-up soil. Several bines emerge the first year and, in the second year, the grower trains the bines up tall trellises. They reach full production in the third year. Harvesters cut the bines each August and remove the flowers.

Lewis grows varieties called Cascade, Centennial, Columbus, and Fuggle. He and friends harvested 250 pounds from his two-acre hopyard in 2017. With most of those plants now at full maturity, he hopes to harvest 500 pounds this year.

Big Timber Brewing in Elkins has used Lewis's hops in its seasonal West Virginia Wet Hop Ale. It's said to have a much fresher hop taste than beer made of preserved hops.

A worldwide hop shortage is expected to continue for years, and there's a practically bottomless market near here. "Something like one-third of the U.S. population is within five hours of West Virginia," Lewis says. "There are so many brewers that West Virginia could supply that I think this is a crop that can really help West Virginia's economy."

Lewis invites other growers to plant on his land and operate as a co-op, sharing equipment and effort to make the process more efficient and cost-effective. "If anybody wants help getting started, I'd be happy to help them," he says. *@springwaterfarmswv on Facebook*

written by PAM KASEY

COURTESY OF JAMES LEWIS

EXPLORE FIND YOUR UPSHUR

IMAGINE A MAP OF WEST VIRGINIA.

Now, pretend she's a person. Imagine where the heart would be. That's Upshur County. Formed 12 years before West Virginia gained statehood, Upshur County contains many hidden treasures just waiting to be discovered—small town getaways with big time charm.

Pick Your Own Adventure

If your only experience with blueberries is the plastic cartons at the grocery store—well, you don't know berries. So make a trip to **Floral Acres** in French Creek, where you'll find more than 3,200 bushes bursting with many varieties of blueberries, each with their own unique flavor profile.

The pick-your-own season begins on June 30 at 9 a.m. and lasts into August. Floral Acres provides buckets for picking—you can pick a pint for just $2—as well as ice water to keep you hydrated. Pro tip: Wear sunscreen and take a hat! *385 Bridal Ridge Road, French Creek 304.924.6462, floralacres.com*

The Farmers' Market

Longtime friends Dale Hawkins and Teresa Lipps launched **Fish Hawk Acres**, their 40-acre farm and catering company, in 2007. Foodies throughout the state quickly came to know Fish Hawk for its monthly farm dinners, held from June to September on the second Thursday of the month. Those dinners are still a huge draw for this farm, which features the best seasonal ingredients around as well as live entertainment.

If you can't wait for one of the dinners, head to **Fish Hawk Acres Market** in downtown Buckhannon. This specialty market and cafe offers fresh produce from local growers, unique cheeses, a case full of delectable baked goods, and scratch-made soups, salads, and sandwiches, as well as a daily grab-and-go dinner option. *5 West Main Street, Buckhannon 304.473.7741, fishhawkacreswv.com*

Home Entertainment

Heather and Bronson McNemar are shaking up the state music scene by hosting some of the state's best bands in a unique, intimate venue—the living room in their cozy Buckhannon farmhouse, dubbed **McNemar House**. The house is also home to an art gallery and offers three rooms for guests to spend the night. *112 Paradise Road, Buckhannon, 304.439.1145 mcnemarhouse.com*

Get Out

When the summer sun shines hot, Upshur Countians head for the water. You'll find five boat launches along the Buckhannon River, which means you can paddle your kayak or canoe for a few hours or enjoy an all-day float. **Tygart River Outfitters** provide boat rentals but can also organize a guided tour for your group. *304.613.5557, tygartriveroutfitters.com*

The Buckhannon River also features world-class muskie fishing

on a six-and-a-half-mile section that runs from the city's water supply dam upstream to the first riffle. If you're lucky enough to find one, these big fish will put up a good fight—just be sure to release your catch after snagging your requisite selfie.

Audra State Park is a great place to take a dip in the Middle Fork River or wet your fishing line in pursuit of rainbow trout. The park also offers hiking and biking trails, camping areas, and geocaching opportunities. *8397 Audra Park Road, Buckhannon 304.457.1162, wvstateparks.com*

For more hiking and biking, check out **Upshur County Trails**. This four-mile trail system at the Upshur County Recreation Park is conveniently located behind Buckhannon-Upshur High School on West Virginia Route 20. There are plans for even more trails in the future, which will eventually connect Upshur County with other trail systems throughout West Virginia. *visitbuckhannon.org/upshur-county-trails*

Income potential abounds

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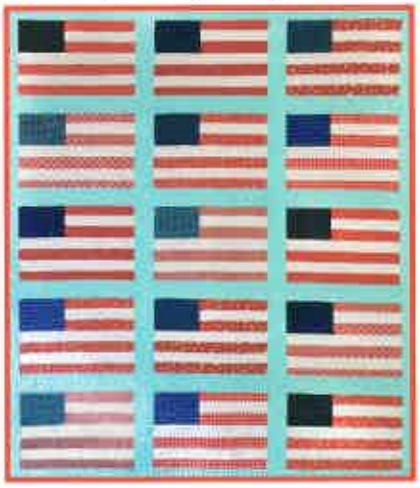

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10 THINGS

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Rack up the "likes" with these Insta-worthy destinations.

1. Coal River Water Trail in Boone County
2. The Hatfield and McCoy ATV & UTV Trails in Mingo County
3. Blackwater Falls State Park in Tucker County
4. Blennerhassett Island State Park in Wood County
5. Summersville Lake in Nicholas County
6. Heritage Farm in Cabell County
7. Sandstone Falls in Summers County
8. Snowshoe Mountain in Pocahontas County
9. Watoga State Park in Pocahontas County
10. Stonewall Resort in Lewis County

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American Muscle Docks and Fabrication's recent project in San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua.

MADE IN WV

Docked and Loaded

A Wellsburg company takes its patented dock technology to clients worldwide.

YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER WONDERED who made the parts holding up the dock at your local marina. But, now that you are wondering, the answer could be right around the corner.

American Muscle Docks and Fabrication has manufactured boat dock components in Wellsburg since 1963. The company has built many of the docks throughout West Virginia, but it also sells to government agencies, hotels, marinas, retail customers, and contractors from all over the world. "The majority of people buy their parts in China or India," says chief executive officer Luke Diserio. "We're one of the very few who manufacture what we sell and use."

Diserio's grandfather started the company in 1963. Diserio's father, Paul Diserio, took over in 1987 and currently serves as the company's president. The business made and sold boat dock hardware and components for two local boat dock suppliers under the name Valley Manufacturing until 2012, when the company adopted its current name.

American Muscle Docks' local projects include riverfront parks in Buffalo, Charleston, Chester, Fairmont, Moundsville, New Martinsville, Paden City, and Wellsburg. All those West Virginia park projects feature American Muscle's new patented product Dock Flash, a decorative skirting that adds colors, textures, or designs to the outside of docks.

The U.S. Commercial Service's recent trade mission to Central America brought the West Virginia company a new global client. The city of San Juan del Sur in Nicaragua wanted to build new docks so cruise ship passengers could disembark safely, but could not find a manufacturer who could meet the specifications. American Muscle Docks proposed a successful design and, by August 2017, built the country's first commercial boat dock.

It took several trips to Nicaragua to complete the build. "It was our largest job to date," Diserio says. "With the materials they wanted to use, it wasn't standard for us, but we had the ability to do it." But now that cruise lines finally have a place to take passengers ashore, the country's tourism industry is seeing a major boost.

So, the next time you find yourself walking along a marina, think about who made the parts keeping you above water. It could very well be the same West Virginia company that's connecting Wellsburg to the world.

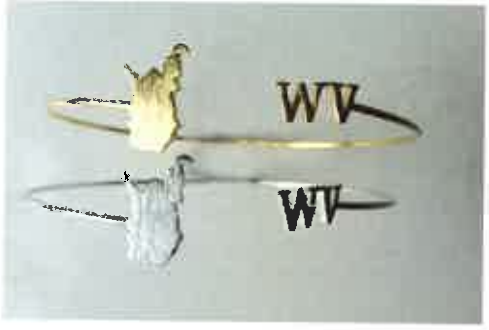
written by **JENNIFER SKINNER**

COURTESY OF AMERICAN MUSCLE DOCKS AND FABRICATION

SHOP

Face the Sun

Weslea Coles' Lewisburg boutique celebrates life in West Virginia.



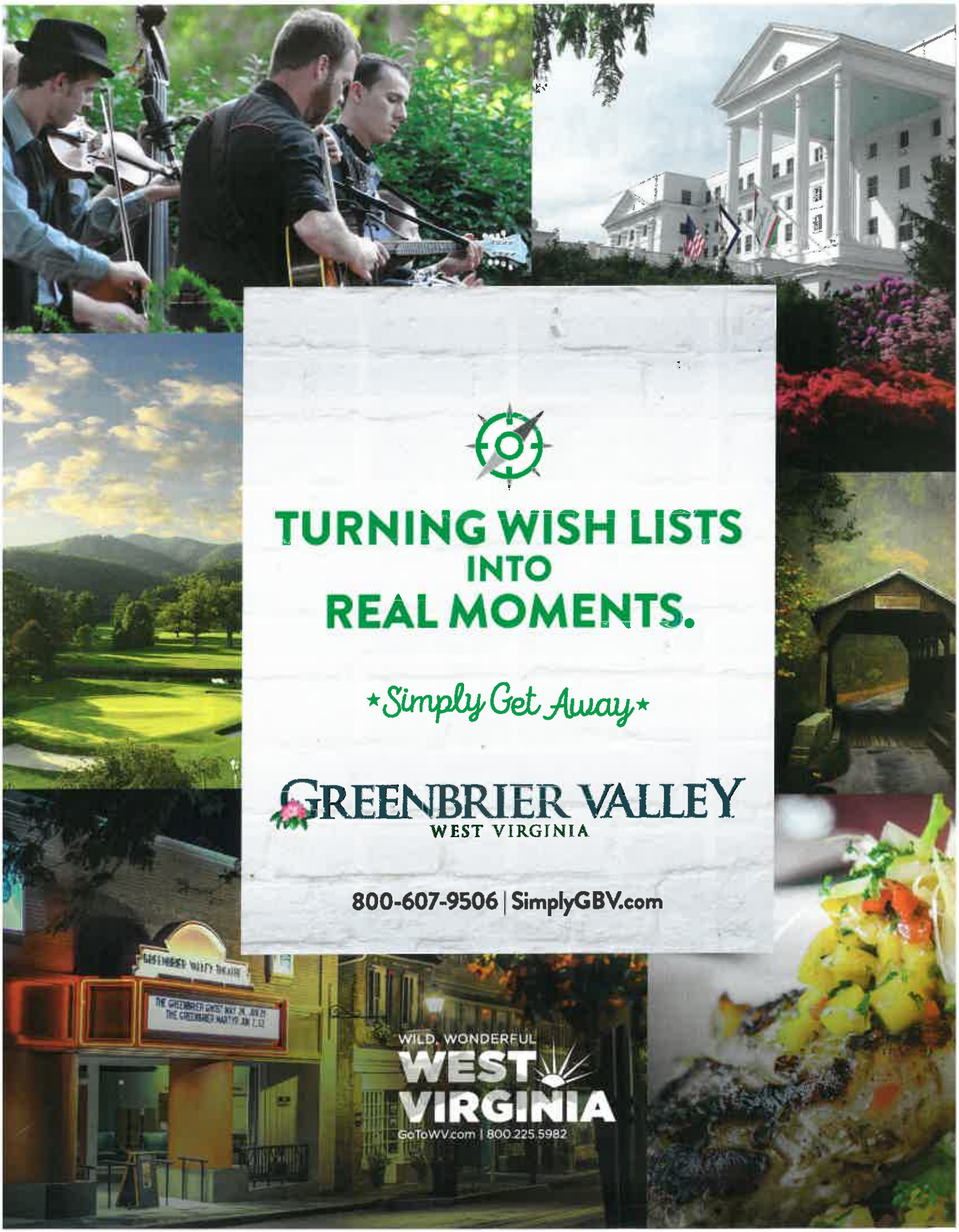
Sunflower Soul owner Weslea Coles shows off her wares. Her Pretty White Trash line includes silver or gold WV bracelets, $14.95 each, and Almost Heaven baseball caps, $20 each.

WESLEA COLES, OWNER OF LEWISBURG'S Sunflower Soul boutique, goes with her gut when selecting items to sell in her store. "I buy what I like. I don't really go with the trend. I never have," she says.

Coles uses the same strategy when designing her in-house brand, Pretty White Trash. She goes with what she likes and customers can't get enough. Rummage through the racks and you'll find mugs and t-shirts featuring favorite phrases like "Wild & Wonderful," "Mountain Momma," "Almost Heaven," and "Mountain Living, Life Loving." There are necklaces featuring the state outline, Mason jar tumblers emblazoned with "Love, Moonshine, and Music," and bags featuring the lyrics to "Take Me Home, Country Roads."

Each design is hand-drawn by Coles, who stays busy coming up with new ideas to keep her inventory fresh. She likes to put happy quotes on her products because she believes that happiness will rub off on customers. Coles prides herself on having a "feel good" store. It's a desire reflected by her personal motto: "Hold your head up and face the sun." "I design with that in mind," she says. "I deal with my customers with that state of mind." *203 East Washington Street, 304.645.7685 pretty-whitetrash.com*

written by **HALEY MOORE**
photographed by **NIKKI BOWMAN**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THIS

Feed the Meter

Every town has its own approach to managing street parking. Some places let you park for free, others charge a few cents or even a few dollars. Some monitor the meters during business hours, some watch them 24/7. We compiled this handy guide to keep you ticket-free this summer.

	COST	HOURS ENFORCED	APP?	FIRST-OFFENSE FINE
CHARLESTON	25 cents to $1.50/hour	Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Parkmobile	$10 if paid within 10 days
ELKINS	5 cents to 25 cents/hour. Free in lot behind city hall	Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	None	$4 if paid within 24 hours
FAYETTEVILLE	Free			
HARPERS FERRY	$1 to $3/hour	Every day, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.	Parkmobile	$30 for $3/hour spaces, $20/hour for others if paid within 7 days
HUNTINGTON	25 cents/hour at street meters. 50 cents/hour on city lots	Monday–Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Parkmobile	$5 if paid within 7 days
LEWISBURG	Free			
MORGANTOWN	75 cents to $1.25/hour	Every day, 24 hours	Parkmobile	$5 if paid within 10 days
SHEPHERDSTOWN	50 cents/hour at meters, $10 for a day pass, free in designated areas	Monday–Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.	PassportParking Mobile Pay	$10 if paid within 24 hours
THOMAS	Free			
WHEELING	25 cents/hour	Monday–Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.	None	$10 if paid within 30 days

COURTESY OF BLENKO GLASS COMPANY

STATE PRIDE

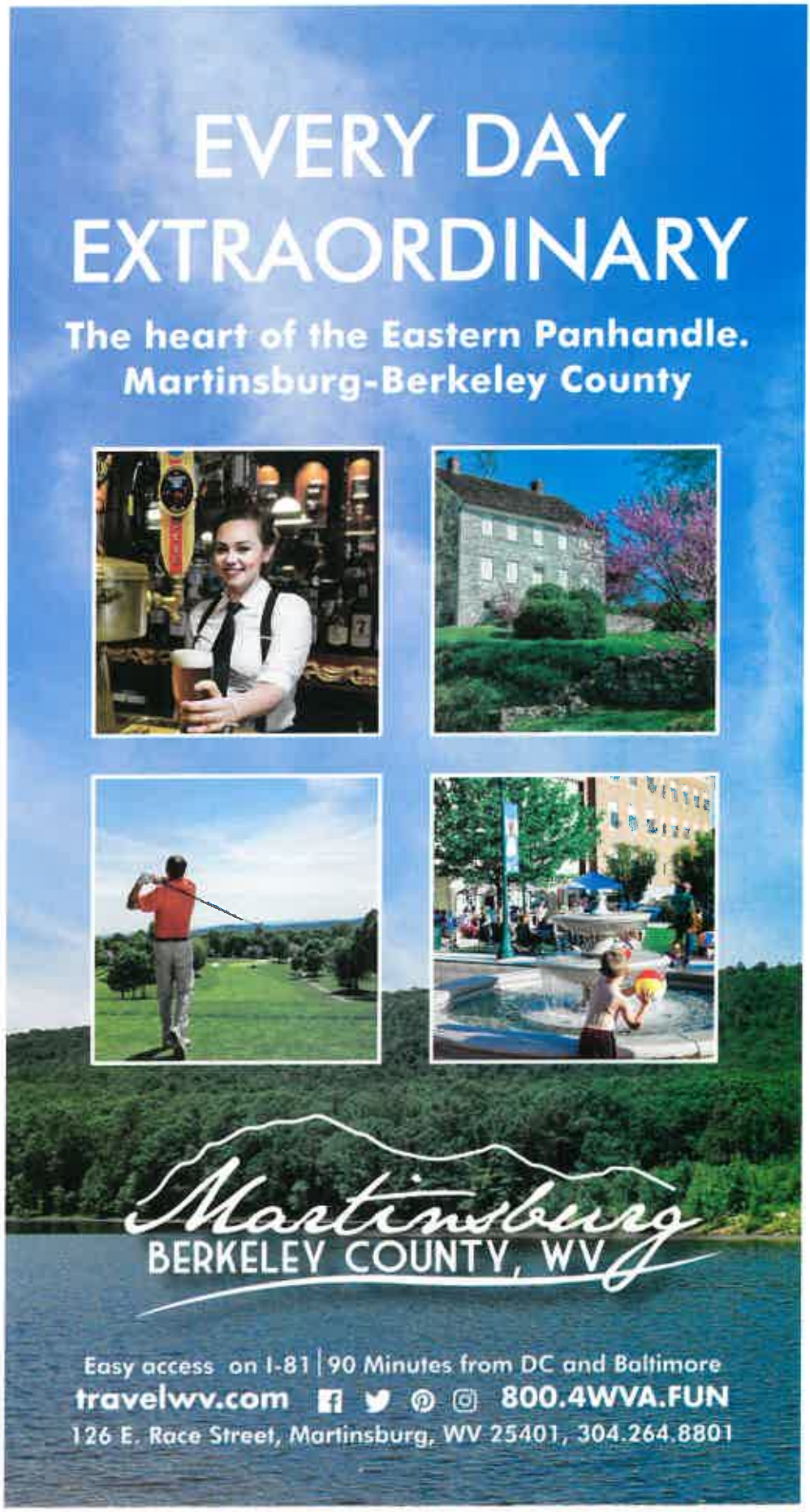
Blenko or You'll Miss It

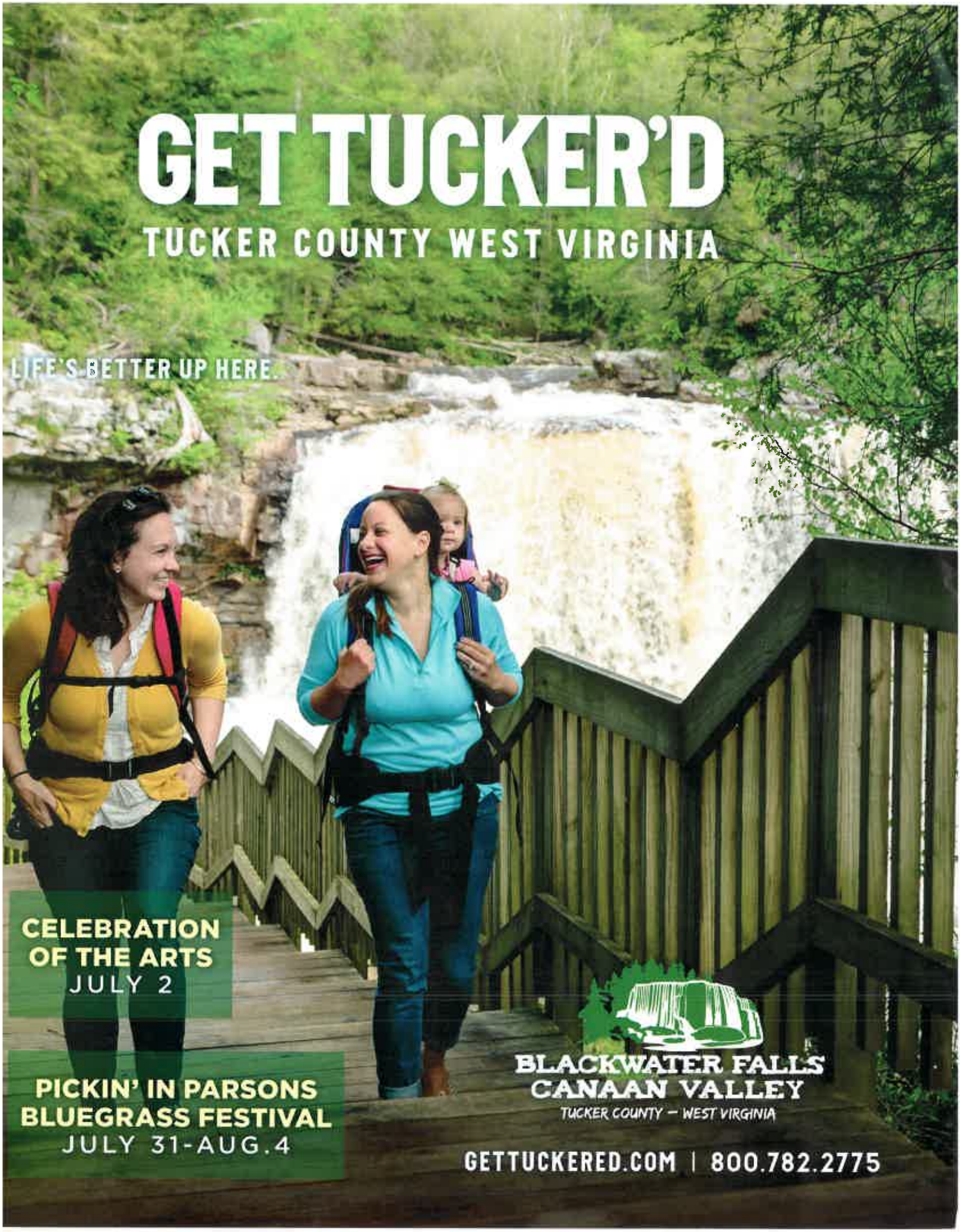
Glass artists mark the Mountain State's 155th birthday with a limited-edition work.

BLENKO GLASS COMPANY will again celebrate West Virginia Day with a limited edition hand-formed, mouth-blown glass piece. This year's design is a 22-inch-tall, blue and green glass decanter bottle designed by artists Emma Walters and Andrew Shaffer to reflect the strength of West Virginia's mountains and people.

Blenko will only make 155 of these numbered and signed pieces—one for each year of the state's existence—and will sell them for $155 each, plus tax. They go on sale Saturday, June 16, at the glass company's gift shop in Milton. There's a limit of one per customer and no advance or phone orders are allowed.

Doors open at 8 a.m. but you'll need to get in line early if you want to nab one of these beauties. The day will also include birthday cake and other refreshments, and Blenko president Walter Blenko, Jr. will be on hand from 8 a.m. to noon to sign your glass purchases. *9 Bill Blenko Drive, 304.743.9081, blenko.com*

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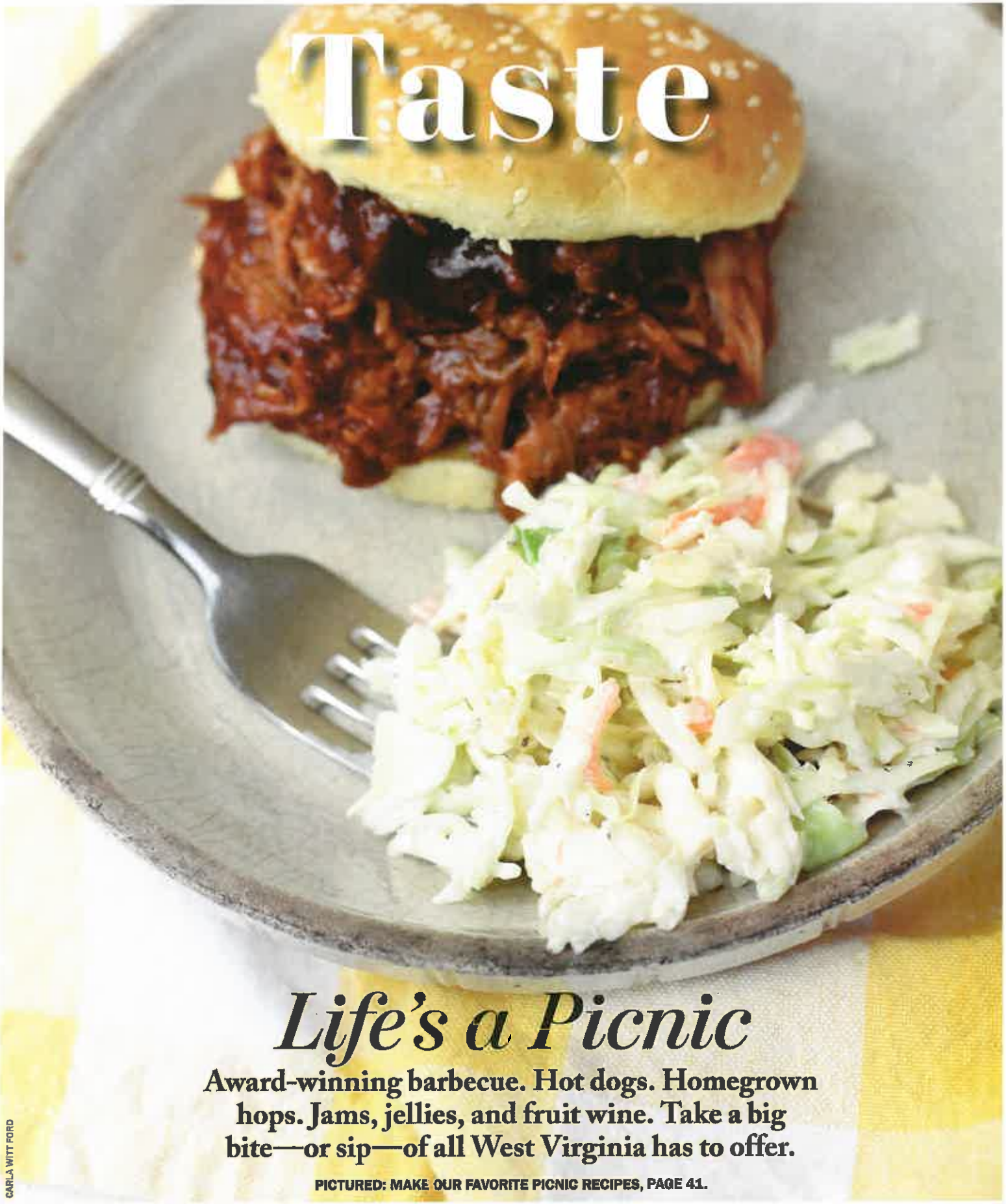


CARLA WITT FORD

Life's a Picnic

Award-winning barbecue. Hot dogs. Homegrown hops. Jams, jellies, and fruit wine. Take a big bite—or sip—of all West Virginia has to offer.

PICTURED: MAKE OUR FAVORITE PICNIC RECIPES, PAGE 41.

RAYMOND THOMPSON

JESSIE FLEISCHMAN

Blowing Smoke

World barbecue champion Luke Darnell talks cartoon pigs, done temperatures, and popped tires.

interviewed by **ZACK HAROLD**

MORGANTOWN NATIVE LUKE DARNELL STARTED BARBECUING as a kid, spending hours with his friends tending a smoking hole in the ground at their parents' summertime pig roasts. "When smoke would start coming out of the ground, we'd have to take a shovel and cover it. We didn't know our parents did that so they could sit around and drink beer all day."

Later, after moving to the Washington, D.C., area, he joined a competition barbecue team. After a few years without much success, his wife and best friend suggested Darnell start his own team. "They saw I had a passion for it. Here we are 5 years later." He founded Old Virginia Smoke in 2013 and, by 2016, he was named World Barbecue Champion at the World Food Championships in Orange Beach, Alabama. Darnell was also named the 2017 Carolyn Wells Barbecue Ambassador by the Kansas City Barbecue Society.

Look for him on June 15 and 16 at the Almost Heaven BBQ Bash, held at the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum in Weston.

"When we started this team, we were trying to figure out what the name would be. My brother, who still lives in Morgantown, he's kind of a creative genius. He said 'You're not going to have a cartoon pig.' The barbecue world is overrun with cartoon pigs. He came up with 'Old Virginia,' because it used to be one state, plus it includes my background—born and raised in West Virginia and now living in Virginia.

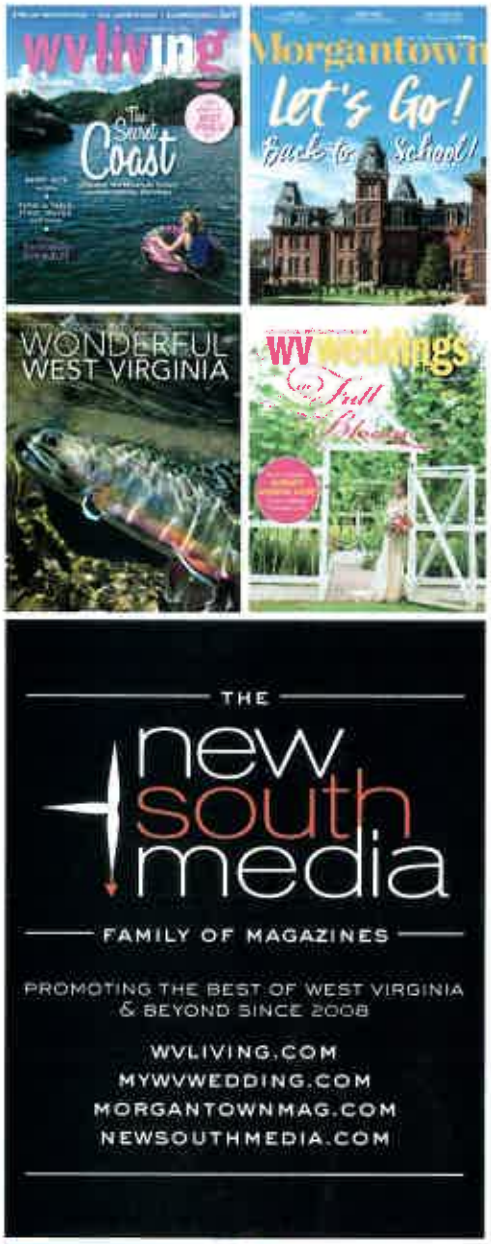
After we had our first season as Old Virginia Smoke, we decided we were going to go all the way in. We cooked every weekend between Christmas and May to learn the meat, our smoker, to learn about ourselves. It's hard work and practice and dedication.

Your goal is to have the most consistent product from week to week. Then you can start making changes until you find that sweet spot—different flavor changes, adding a little heat, trying out different temperatures for tenderness. You're constantly tweaking because you can constantly make it better. That's the best thing about barbecue. There's a thousand different ways to get where you need to be.

You can make small changes but you don't want to do anything drastic. There are certain things that are going to work in certain places. If you go into the New England, they like a little maple syrup. If you go into North Carolina, you're going to go with more vinegar.

Cook it 'til it's done, that's the number one thing. They say pork is done at 145, but you're going to cook butt 'til it's 198. It sounds like it's overcooked, but it's not. You've got to break down that connective tissue.

The barbecue family is supportive. It's people from all different walks of life. Some of our best friends in the world are barbecue people. You break down on the side of the road, or you're traveling a long distance and need something, someone from the barbecue community is going to help you. Last year I popped a tire and we were in the middle of Illinois. I pulled into this parking lot and, all of a sudden, this guy pulls in. A barbecue guy. He'd seen me limping up the road and stopped to make sure I was all right. Everybody could take a page from that.



Down-Home Cooking

The Country Cafe in Harpers Ferry has been dishing out home-style meals for more than 20 years.

written by **NIKKI BOWMAN**

photographedd by **CARLA WITT FORD**

As you drive into Harpers Ferry on Washington Street, on your right you'll see a charming little stone restaurant—the Country Cafe. It's open from 7:30 a.m. until 3 p.m. every day except Monday and is a great place to stop for breakfast or lunch. With delicious omelets and breakfast sandwiches, it is a go-to spot for locals and tourists alike. Their fresh donuts are made to order and topped with vanilla, chocolate, peanut butter, or mint glazes that go well with a cup of Black Dog coffee.

If you happen by at lunch, you are in for a treat of down-home cooking. Their spinach salad is topped with cheddar cheese, bacon, red onion, and hard-boiled eggs and covered in a delicious house buttermilk dressing. They claim to have the best hamburger in town, but their pulled pork barbecue sandwich and their foot-long hot dogs that are freshly made for them by Holsinger's Meat Market are very popular. You can get your hot dog in traditional West Virginia-style, Chicago-style, or topped with bacon and cheddar cheese. No matter what you choose to eat at lunch, you'll want to round out your meal with a hand-dipped shake or root beer float. *1715 Washington Street 304.535.2327, country-cafe.com*

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Building a Life with Berries

Becky and Bob Titchenal followed country roads—and their hearts—to the place they belong.

written by **KAYLYN CHRISTOPHER**

Becky and Bob Titchenal met in the early 1990s, after each had left their homes among the hills to pursue careers elsewhere, then returned to the state. They quickly bonded over their homesickness, fell in love, got married, and came to a very important agreement: "We both said, 'We will never leave again,'" Becky says.

The couple started brainstorming, determined to find a purpose and redefine their lives. "I asked Bob, 'What would you do if you followed your heart?'" Becky says. "He said, 'I would like to have a farm and grow berries.'"

West Virginia Fruit and Berry launched in September 1995. The Titchenals first began growing berries in the Sun Valley area of Harrison County, then on a 168-acre farm in Brushy Fork, just outside Bridgeport. In the early 2000s, the couple opened five acres of the property to the public as a pick-your-own berry farm with a souvenir store, The Berry Patch Gift Shop, on-site.

The Titchenals then began work on a line of jams, jellies, and preserves for specialty food retail markets, tourist centers, and grocery stores. "Our dream was to become a company that would sell the memories of growing up in the state of West Virginia," says Becky.

The company now carries 17 varieties of preserves, jams, and jellies, six flavors of fruit butters, and four fruit wine varieties. The Titchenals no longer grow berries on the property, and the farm is no longer open to the public, but they still have a facility in Brushy Fork, open by appointment for those who want to see for themselves how West Virginia Fruit and Berry got its start.

"We want to bring back memories to all those West Virginians not only here, but all over the country and beyond," Becky says. "We are proud to share the pride and tradition of our state through products we all know and remember growing up in this great state."

West Virginia Fruit and Berry products are available at stores and distributors across seven states, as well as on their website. *304.842.8945*
wvfruitandberry.com

COURTESY OF WEST VIRGINIA FRUIT AND BERRY

Pop Shop

For a quick snack or take-away treat, visit Mountaineer Popcorn Company.

written and photographed by **NIKKI BOWMAN**

Things are popping in Shepherdstown. Tucked into a charming storefront on German Street is Mike and Erin Valasek's Mountaineer Popcorn Company. Freshly popped and highly addicting, there are more than 20 daily rotating flavors, including Caramel Cashew, Peanut Butter Cup, Birthday Cake, and tried-and-true Cheddar. It is made using non-GMO popcorn kernels, grown exclusively for them by Town & Country Nursery in Kearneysville.

Can't make it to Shepherdstown? Markets and coffee shops from Leesburg to Charles Town to Sharpsburg carry it, or you can order a bag or a collectible tin online. Want to add a West Virginia-grown and produced food to your event? Mountaineer Popcorn Company can also accommodate bulk orders. *102 East German Street, Shepherdstown*
410.937.4612
mountaineerpopcorn.com
@mountaineerpopcorncompany on Facebook

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In Pizza We Crust

Rubi's Pizza & Grill has been dishing out creative pizzas, subs, and salads to the Mid-Ohio Valley since 1998.

written and photographed by NIKKI BOWMAN

This is a warning. If you are on a low-carb diet, you should look away now. You won't want to read about Rubi's Spaghetti Pizza—a mouthwatering combination of their decadent spaghetti topped with mozzarella cheese and stuffed into a pocket made of pizza dough. Great idea, right?

The 7th Street location is nondescript, but locals like it that way. When you walk in the door, you can saunter right up to the glass counter display, where you're immediately tempted with freshly made pizzas sold by the slice—a slice of the spaghetti pizza will cost you $4.75—or as whole pies. The menu is packed with salads, subs, and pasta dinners, too. And the Cannoli and Strawberries and Cream will make you want to eat dessert first. *1414 7th Street Parkersburg, 304.485.2552 @rubispizza on Facebook*

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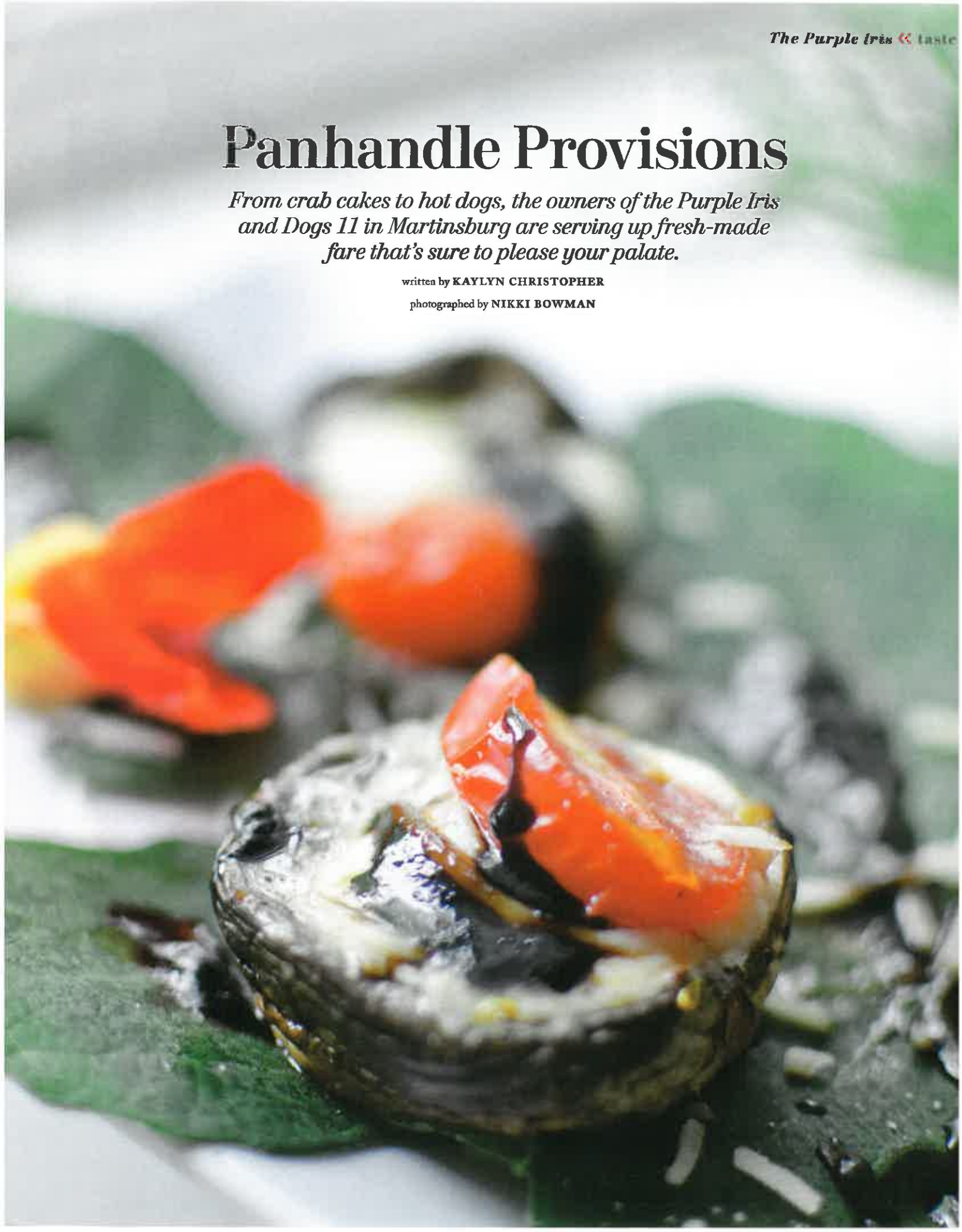
Panhandle Provisions

From crab cakes to hot dogs, the owners of the Purple Iris and Dogs 11 in Martinsburg are serving up fresh-made fare that's sure to please your palate.

written by **KAYLYN CHRISTOPHER**

photographed by **NIKKI BOWMAN**



The Hartwood Mansion in Martinsburg has long been the Eastern Panhandle's go-to venue for formal events. With towering trees and lush gardens, the 17-acre property boasts sophisticated style and colonial charm in a country setting, making it a coveted location for special occasions like anniversary celebrations, wedding ceremonies, and rehearsal dinners.

The mansion was originally built in 1929 and fully restored in 1998. But when Tiffany and Daniel Harshbarger purchased the property 16 years ago, the husband and wife duo had a grand vision to bring something new to the old house.

Daniel—a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania native and graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in New York City—previously worked at the Sheraton Washington Hotel in Washington, D.C., the Lakewood Country Club in Rockville, Maryland, and Catoctin Inn and Catering in Buckeystown, Maryland. He purchased a home in Martinsburg in 1998 while he was part owner of the Catoctin Inn. An avid outdoorsman and fisherman, he fell in love with West Virginia and his new home near the Potomac River and immediately knew the community would have an appetite for his made-from-scratch American cuisine. He also knew the Hartwood Mansion was just the place to bring his idea to life. So, in 2002, he and Tiffany bought the mansion, renamed it The Purple Iris, and added fine dining to its amenities.

On the second level of the 10,000-square-foot mansion, former bedrooms have been converted into dining rooms that now serve

diners looking for quality, freshly made food. "We bake our own bread and make all dressings and sauces, and our pastry chef makes all of the desserts in-house," says Tiffany, who oversees the restaurant's front-of-house operations while Daniel manages the kitchen. The couple even grows their own herbs to use in dishes and garnish guests' plates.

Customers can expect an ever-changing menu and Tiffany invites them to try seasonal specials like the Yulebe Shellfish: a delectable combination of lobster, shrimp, crab, fettuccine, and lobster prawn bisque. The menu also features beloved standards like the Slammin' Salmon filet, the Whoa Cowboy! ribeye steak, and the always popular Pride and Joy jumbo lump crab cakes.

The Purple Iris's fresh and appetizing food is complemented by superb hospitality. "Our service is friendly and inviting," Tiffany says. "We want people to come as they are and to enjoy a good meal. We believe in giving good portions and good, honest service."

And that service doesn't end at the dinner table. Under the direction of the Harshbargers, The Purple Iris has not only flourished as a restaurant but now also offers three carriage rooms for overnight accommodations. "We also get a lot of customers from outside West Virginia," Tiffany says. "They like the fact that we are close to Harpers Ferry and Berkeley Springs. The Eastern Panhandle has so much to offer, and they can enjoy a slower pace of life here." Each room features a king-size bed, a gas fireplace, and a whirlpool tub.

While reservations are required for a night's stay or an evening of fine dining at the Purple Iris, Tiffany and Daniel also have something for those seeking a more informal meal—Dogs 11, their hot dog and hamburger joint, located right next door. "Daniel wanted to offer the community a local place to go get an iconic hot dog, hamburger, or kielbasa on a fresh homemade bun," Tiffany says. "Dogs 11 also serves hand-cut fries, and we make a lot of our own accompaniments."

Simply put, no matter your craving, the Harshbargers have got you covered.

The Purple Iris is open 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., Wednesday through Saturday. Dogs 11 is open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday.
1956 Winchester Avenue, Martinsburg, 304.262.6110
thepurpleirisathartwood.com

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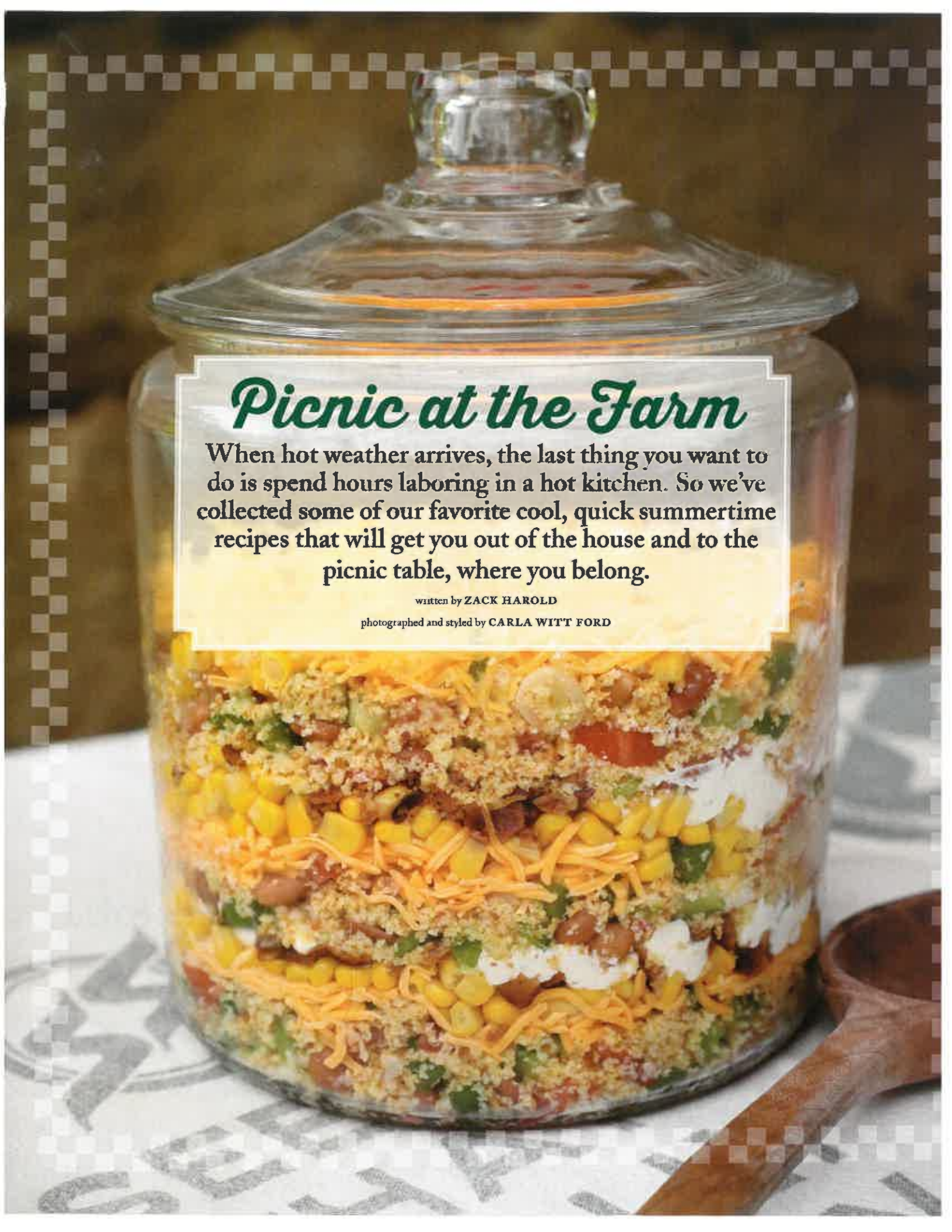

Picnic at the Farm

When hot weather arrives, the last thing you want to do is spend hours laboring in a hot kitchen. So we've collected some of our favorite cool, quick summertime recipes that will get you out of the house and to the picnic table, where you belong.

written by ZACK HAROLD

photographed and styled by CARLA WITT FORD

Cornbread Salad

1 (16-ounce) package cornbread mix
10 slices bacon
1 ½ cup sour cream
1 ½ cup mayonnaise
1 (1-ounce) package ranch dressing mix
2 cans pinto beans or red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
3 large tomatoes, chopped
1 large green bell pepper, finely chopped
1 cup green onions, chopped
2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
2 cups whole corn, drained

1. Mix cornbread according to directions on package. Bake and allow to cool.
2. Fry bacon. Place on paper towels to drain. Crumble the cooled bacon into small pieces.
3. Mix sour cream, mayo, and dressing mix in a bowl; set aside.
4. In a large bowl crumble half the cornbread, beans, tomatoes, pepper, and onion together.
5. In a trifle or clear bowl add the first crumbled layer (around ⅓ of the mix, reserving the remaining for 2 more layers).
6. Follow with layers of cheese, corn, bacon, and cover with a layer of dressing mixture.
7. Repeat for 2 more layers, ending with the dressing. Garnish with shredded cheese.
8. Cover and chill for 10–12 hours.

YIELD: 6 servings

Tomato *and* Cucumber Salad

2 medium tomatoes, cut into chunks
2 cucumbers, scored lengthwise with a fork, sliced into ¼-inch coins
3 teaspoons olive oil
1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
salt and pepper, to taste
2 tablespoons diced red onion

1. Add tomatoes and cucumbers to a bowl.
2. Drizzle olive oil and vinegar on top. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Toss to coat. Garnish with diced red onion.

YIELD: 6 servings

Pulled Pork BBQ

DRY RUB

3 tablespoons paprika
1 tablespoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1 tablespoon dry mustard
1 tablespoon sea salt

1 (5 to 7 pound) pork roast, preferably shoulder or Boston butt

SAUCE

1 ½ cups cider vinegar
1 cup yellow or brown mustard
½ cup ketchup
⅓ cup packed brown sugar
2 garlic cloves, smashed
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cayenne
½ teaspoon black pepper
Pan drippings from the pork
12 hamburger buns

1. Mix paprika, garlic powder, brown sugar, dry mustard, and salt in a small bowl. Rub spice blend all over pork. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, or up to overnight.
2. Preheat oven to 300°. Roast pork in roasting pan for about 6 hours. It is ready when falling apart.
3. Make barbecue sauce by combining vinegar, mustard, ketchup, brown sugar, garlic, salt, cayenne, and black pepper in a saucepan over medium heat. Simmer gently, stirring for 10 minutes until sugar dissolves. Set aside until pork is done.
4. When pork is ready, remove from oven and place on a large platter. Allow meat to rest about 10 minutes. While resting, deglaze the pan over medium heat with ¾ cup water, scraping with a wooden spoon to pick up all the browned bits. Reduce by about half. Pour into the saucepan with barbecue sauce and cook 5 minutes.
5. While pork is still warm, shred the meat with two forks.
6. Put shredded pork in a bowl and pour half the sauce over. Stir well so the pork is coated with sauce.
7. To serve, spoon pulled pork mixture onto bottom half of hamburger bun. Top with coleslaw or serve on the side. Serve remaining sauce on the side.

YIELD: 12 servings

Creamy Coleslaw

1 head green cabbage, finely shredded
2 large carrots, finely shredded
¾ cup best-quality mayonnaise
2 tablespoons sour cream
2 tablespoons grated Spanish onion
2 tablespoons sugar, or to taste
2 tablespoons white vinegar
1 tablespoon dry mustard
Salt and freshly ground pepper

1. Combine shredded cabbage and carrots in a large bowl.
2. Whisk together mayonnaise, sour cream, onion, sugar, vinegar, mustard, salt, and pepper in a medium bowl, then add to cabbage mixture.
3. Mix well to combine and taste for seasoning. Add more salt, pepper, or sugar if desired.
4. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

YIELD: 8 servings

Green Beans *with* Bacon

4 bacon strips, diced
½ cup chopped onion
8 cups fresh green beans, trimmed
¼ teaspoon salt
⅛ teaspoon pepper

1. In a large skillet, cook bacon and onion over medium heat until bacon is crisp and onion is tender.
2. Cut green beans into 1-inch pieces, then put in large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil.
3. Cook, uncovered, for 8–10 minutes or until crisp-tender. Drain well. Add to bacon mixture. Sprinkle with salt and pepper; toss to coat.

YIELD: 8 servings

Fresh Fruit Salad

⅔ cup fresh orange juice
⅓ cup fresh lemon juice
⅓ cup packed brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 cups cubed watermelon, seedless
3–4 cups cubed cantaloupe
3–4 cups cubed honeydew melon
2 cups strawberries, hulled and sliced
2 cups blueberries

1. In a saucepan over medium-high heat, bring orange juice, lemon juice, and brown sugar to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla extract. Set aside to cool.
2. Layer fruit in a large, clear glass bowl in this order: watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew, strawberries, and blueberries. Pour cooled sauce over the fruit. Cover and refrigerate for 3–4 hours before serving.

NOTE: Add pineapple, mango, and kiwi for a tropical touch.

YIELD: 6–8 servings

BETTER **BREWS**

Experience "Huntington's Favorite Day" with top-notch brews, live music, and the Jewel City's best cuisine.

Huntington's popular **Rails & Ales Festival** has grown dramatically since it launched in 2013, in both attendance and quality of the beer selection. "It's Huntington's favorite day," says Jessica Pressman, member of the Better Beer Coalition, which organizes the event.

This year's event—coming to Harris Riverfront Park on Saturday, August 11—will be bigger than ever, but the goal remains the same. "Our objective has always been to promote a craft beer culture in the area and to make Huntington a craft beer destination," Pressman says.

Fellow member Jeff McKay, who owns Huntington's Summit Beer Station, is putting together a beer list featuring more than 300 brews from across the United States and Europe, securing limited-edition kegs you won't find at your local watering hole. But the festival will also include many offerings from breweries around West Virginia. In fact, this year's event will feature beers from almost every one of the state's 20-plus breweries.

Pressman says the festival is popular with beer aficionados, "but it's also for people who are just starting to dabble." The beer isn't the only reason to buy a ticket though. The coalition has recruited some of the area's best restaurants to feed attendees, booked top-notch musical acts for live entertainment, and invited the state's most talented artists to sell their wares. "We feel strongly about providing the best possible experience for our guests," Pressman says. *For tickets, visit railsandales.com, @railsandalesfestival on Facebook*

DIY Pub Crawl

Can't make it to **Rails & Ales?** No worries. Huntington has plenty of interesting beers to sample all year long.

Bahnhof WVrsthaus & Biergarten

With German-inspired entrees, house-made sausages, and an impressive 30-beer tap list, Bahnhof is quickly becoming one of the city's favorite haunts. *745 7th Avenue, bahnhofwv.com, "Bahnhof WVrsthaus & Biergarten" on Facebook*

Black Sheep Burrito and Brews

Now in a bigger, better location at Pullman Square, Black Sheep offers the same gourmet tacos and burritos alongside an ever-changing list of brews from Bad Shepherd Beer Company, a microbrewery located at Black Sheep's Charleston location. *279 9th Street, blacksheepwv.com, @blacksheepwv on Facebook*

Summit Beer Station

Ranked as one of America's best beer bars by the Brewers Association, Summit offers a wide array of American Craft and imported beers on its 26 taps, plus 120 more varieties in cans and bottles. *321 9th Street, @summitbeerstation on Facebook*

The Peddler

In 2017, this burger-centric restaurant launched the first craft brewery in Huntington since the late 1990s. Order a pint with dinner, then take home a growler to enjoy later. *835 3rd Avenue, "The Peddler" on Facebook*

Backyard Pizza and Raw Bar

Whether you're having brunch, enjoying a pizza, or slurping down oysters on the halfshell, you'll find the perfect beer pairing thanks to Backyard's eclectic draft list. Brews come from Backyard's sister restaurant The Peddler as well as from craft breweries from around the country. *833 3rd Avenue, backyardpizzawv.com, @backyardpizzaandrawbar on Facebook*

Taps at Heritage

Located in Huntington's historical Heritage Station, this 14-tap bar offers up beer and cider plus more than 20 additional selections in cans and bottles. *210 11th Street, tapsatheritage.com*

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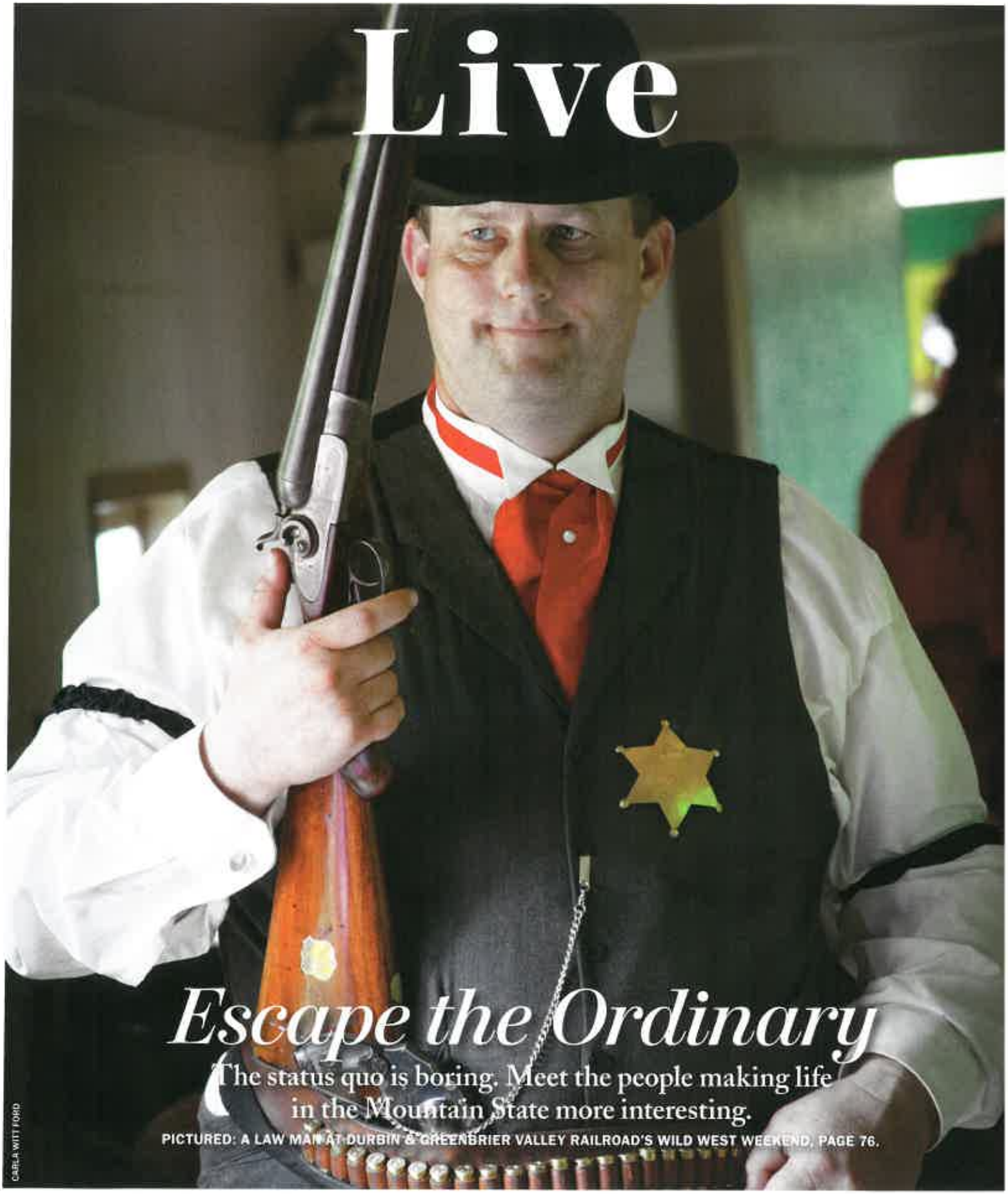

Escape the Ordinary

The status quo is boring. Meet the people making life in the Mountain State more interesting.

PICTURED: A LAW MAN AT DURBIN & GREENBRIER VALLEY RAILROAD'S WILD WEST WEEKEND, PAGE 76.

CARLA WITT FORD

Questions: 304.340.3557

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Fresh Pickings

Orr's Farm Market provides Martinsburg with education, entertainment, and good eats.

written by JENNIFER SKINNER

photographed by CARLA WITT FORD

As Katy Orr-Dove loaded a group of second graders onto a wagon during a field trip at Orr's Farm Market last year, she noticed a little boy tearing up. His classmates started teasing him. She asked him if he was okay. "I'm sorry, I'm just so excited," he says. "This is the first time I've ever been on a hayride."

It's easy to understand how the little guy got overwhelmed. In addition to its retail and wholesale business, Orr's Farm Market in Martinsburg offers pick-your-own produce, festivals, live music, and educational tours. Orr-Dove, the general manager, understands the role a local farm market plays in developing healthy nutrition habits and providing new experiences for kids. That's partly why she returned to the family farm 13 years ago.

An Heirloom Operation

Orr's Farm Market began in 1995, but the farm goes back to the 1950s when Orr-Dove's grandfather, George S. Orr, Jr., purchased his first orchard. The soil wasn't good there, though, so he and his wife looked at the ridge between Martinsburg and Winchester, Virginia, and purchased the current farm market's land.

The Orrs acquired hundreds more acres as adjacent dairy farms went out of business. In the early 1960s, the family built a packing shed to sell their produce wholesale. Through the 1980s, their farm sold packed peaches, pears, plums, and more to grocery stores, schools, other farm markets, and peddlers.

As word spread about the fresh produce at Orr's Farm, people started to walk right up to the packing shed and ask for bushels of peaches and apples. It became clear the farm needed to evolve to serve the local community. And over the past

Orr's Farm, which started with the late George S. Orr, Jr. in the 1950s, is now a four-generation operation.

COURTESY OF THE ORR FAMILY

In addition to wholesale operations, the Orrs also sell fresh fruits, berries, and vegetables to the public at their farm market.

23 years, the business has only continued to expand. "We've seen growth every year in our farm market," says Mark Orr, one of George's three sons and current owner of the family business. "When we're busy, it's hard for people to walk through."

Orr's Farm Market now runs a full retail business, selling its produce to customers while also packing produce for wholesale customers throughout the region. Agri-tourism has exploded—crowds come for the cherry blossom trees in the spring, berries and live bluegrass music in the summer, and pick-your-own apples in the fall. When the farm market held its first public pumpkin picking, they just gave visitors a ride into a pumpkin field. Now, the pumpkin patch is decorated each year with elaborate themes and it partners with an anti-bullying campaign. "Making happy memories at our farm is something we can give back to Martinsburg," Orr-Dove says. "A lot of our customers come at least seasonally. They'll come from out of the area once a year, to the pumpkin patch or to get their bushels of apples."

School trips and other youth groups come to Orr's Farm Market frequently, and Orr-Dove gets to lead those groups through a curriculum that teaches the value of fresh food and farming. She noticed her own children would not always eat the produce she bought at the grocery store but, "if you bring them to the farm and let them pick for themselves, they'll eat it," she says. "A lot of children have never been on a farm. That's why I love the school tours, because it's not just the children whose parents would bring them to a farm."

Still Growing

Most of the farm's operations are handled by the family—Mark, his wife Melissa, his daughters Olivia and Katy, Katy's husband Don, and his two nephews, Eric and Robbie. The farm also has many longtime employees like Tammy Jones, the assistant market manager, and Donna Kolb, the produce supervisor. "We've had several employees who have retired after 50 years, and some who are working here now for 30 years," Mark Orr says.

Growth has not slowed down for Orr's Farm Market. This summer, the family will expand its market building, allowing room to sell more West Virginia-made products. Just outside, they hope to rework their bison barnyard. It turns out buffalo are fun to watch but aren't as fun to interact with, so the Orrs will add other animals like chickens, goats, cattle, and ponies, turning the area into a pedestrian farm where visitors can touch the animals, work in the garden, and pretend to be farmers for the day. "I think my father would be proud of the operation. He would be tickled to death for the giant crowds," Mark Orr says. "It's going to be a lot to keep up with, but it's exciting at the same time."

682 Orr Drive, Martinsburg, 304.263.1168
orrsfarmmarket.com

DISCOVER Martinsburg/Berkeley County

Looking for a convenient escape? Martinsburg is more than an exit off the interstate—it's where history meets adventure.

PLAY

Kids and the young at heart will love the laughter that comes with each performance at the **Wonderment Puppet Theater**. See local talent in action in seasonal productions at **The Apollo Civic Theatre**. Take a tour of **DeFluri's Chocolates**, a beautiful chocolate factory that ships its products around the world.

SHOP

The **West Virginia Glass Outlet** showcases hand-blown West Virginia glass. Art comes to life at **Queen Street Gallery**, a unique art store that features everything from posters and original art to African tribal pieces, sculptures, and antique prints. **Flowers Unlimited** is a beautiful European-style floral shop that also features a mix of unique and eclectic items, home decor, keepsakes, and jewelry.

HISTORY

Get a history lesson at **Belle Boyd House**. Built in 1853, the Belle Boyd House is the childhood home of Confederate Civil War spy Belle Boyd. The **Martinsburg Roundhouse** is the only roundhouse structure left in the world with a cast iron frame.

It dates to the 1840s and was partially destroyed by Stonewall Jackson during the Civil War. Tours are available on Saturdays. The house of **Adam Stephen**, who helped establish the town of Martinsburg, was built in the late 1770s and is open as a historic house museum.

Get Outdoors!

Six miles west of Martinsburg is **Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area**, a 23,000-acre area that includes Sleepy Creek Lake, a beautiful small mountain lake that boasts prize-winning bass and large pike, four primitive campsite locations, recreational shooting at the shooting range, and hiking along the beloved **Tuscarora Trail**. The Tuscarora is a 250-mile-long spur trail of the Appalachian Trail and is part of the Great Eastern Trail System. Don't miss the Devil's Nose overlook.

A great way to enjoy the outdoors is through **geocaching**. Go on a quest to find "caches" armed only with GPS coordinates and your logic skills. The Martinsburg-Berkeley County CVB has partnered with geocaching star WVTim to design geotrails. By retrieving the code words inside the caches' logbooks for 13 of the 15 caches on the geotrail, participants will earn a unique, trackable coin.

The Poor House Farm Park is a darling county park 3.5 miles outside of town consisting of 137 acres that include a fully stocked pond, Tuscarora Creek, soccer fields, a football field, and 5 miles of biking and hiking trails.

Got grub? Because of Martinsburg's convenient location to the interstate, one might think that the only options are chain restaurants, but think again. Try one of these local culinary hot spots.

Culinary Coolness

Brix27, a trendy wine bar and tapas restaurant that features special events, themed-food nights, and live music, has taken Martinsburg by storm. The wine bar alone draws people from near and far.

Elegant Option

Another restaurant that is new to the scene is **The Peppermill**, an upscale restaurant located in a historic home. Enjoy the outdoor patio or The Speakeasy, a casual bar on the top floor.

Speakeasy Sips

You'll also want to check out the 1920s-themed **Boyd's Steakhouse** and cozy up to the bar, which was once owned by Al Capone. The eclectic menu incorporates local and regional products and an extensive beer and spirits selection.

Diner Delight

The **Blue White Grill** is a local institution. This traditional diner has been serving burgers, fries, and hot plate specials for more than 50 years.

Other Great Eats

Good Natured is a vegan and vegetarian restaurant and health food shop situated in a renovated historic home with outdoor seating. For homemade Italian dishes, **Casa Visone** will make you feel like you've been transported to Italy.

Save Room for Dessert

Everything Cheesecake bakes cheesecakes fresh every day in an array of signature flavors. For mini to full-size cupcakes, stop by **Latte Da Cupcakery**.

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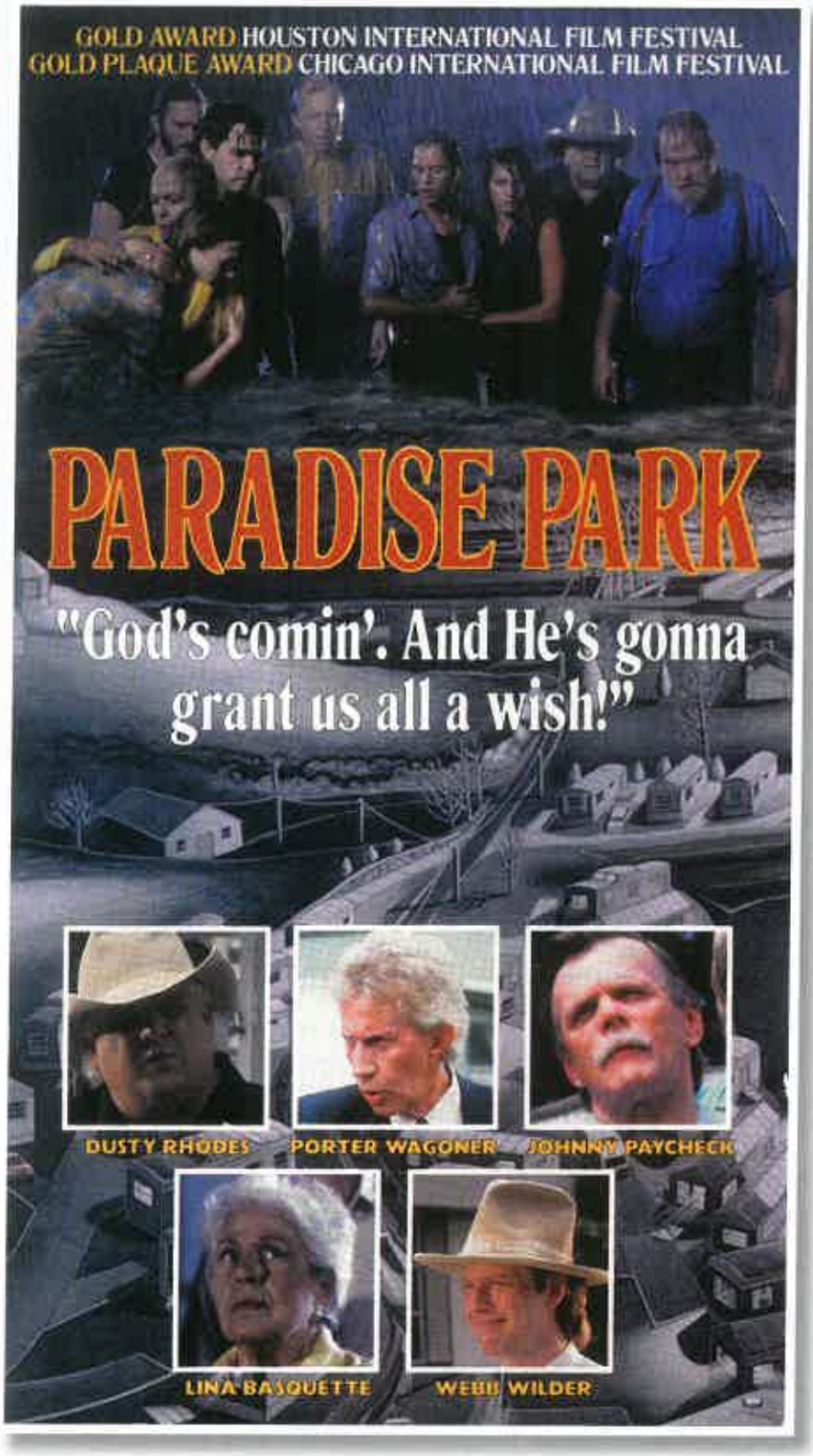

Paradise Lost and Found

The surprising rebirth of the best West Virginia film you've never seen.

written by ZACK HAROLD

When his elderly neighbor Nada tells him about the message she received from God—that he's coming to their West Virginia mobile home park to grant each resident one wish—Marlon, a high school English teacher and one of the central characters in Daniel Boyd's 1992 independent film *Paradise Park*, is obviously skeptical. But as we see in the next scene, just the idea of a wish transports him to the drawing room of a gleaming Victorian mansion, where he wears a Tom Wolfe suit and talks with his posh literary agent, Gerald. Gerald informs Marlon his publisher is begging for "another of those delightful horror works" and offering "a generous advance."

At this point Marlon, played in the film by *Mountain Stage* host Larry Groce, breaks into a monologue. "We must treat each work as if it's our last. When they dig through the rubble of the 20th century, do you want to be noted for some mindless exploitation? Or for something that at least tries to sculpt the joys as well as the sorrows of the human condition into meaningful material?"

☆ ☆ ☆

Daniel Boyd fell in love with movies as a kid, spending his Saturdays at the Apollo Civic Theatre in Martinsburg. He learned to make videos while interning at a public television station, part of his studies at West Virginia University. That led to a graduate program in Arkansas where he started making documentary films.

He moved back to West Virginia and started making fictional shorts, a few of which landed on cable TV. Then, in 1987, he released his first feature film, *Chillers*. It was the perfect time to break into independent film. VCRs were in every living room, video rental stores were in every strip mall, and the public's voracious appetite for home video left plenty of room in the market for independent productions. *Chillers* played in more than 30 countries and won the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Films' prestigious Silver Scroll Award.

For his second feature film, Boyd made *Strangest Dreams: Invasion of the Space Preachers*, a science fiction flick he describes as a "hillbilly version of a National Lampoon film." But when it came time for his next project, Boyd wanted to go a different direction. "I love horror and science fiction. But I wanted to branch out and do something a little more serious."

Inspired by his time living in Mingo County as well as Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*—where the action is set almost entirely on one city block over 24 hours—Boyd decided to set his new movie in a southern West Virginia trailer park over the course of one day. The film would explore each character's disappointments, hopes, and fears through fantasy sequences as they waited to see if Nada's heavenly vision would come true.

ZACK HAROLD

PREVIOUS PAGE: Paradise Park *director Daniel Boyd.*

Stills from 1992's Paradise Park, *a film set in a southern West Virginia mobile home park that featured pro wrestler Dusty Rhodes (top left),* Mountain Stage *host Larry Groce and silent film star Lina Basquette (middle right), and* Grand Ole Opry *star Porter Wagoner.*

Boyd was worried about finding the right trailer park for his film. "I didn't want a trashy one," he says. Thanks to the use of then-Governor Gaston Caperton's helicopter, he found the Shady Side mobile home court in Tornado, in Kanawha County. "We popped over a hill in St. Albans and—there it was," Boyd says. When he stopped by to talk with residents about his plans, everyone welcomed him with open arms.

But location was only one challenge. Boyd also needed to find a cast. These were the days before the Screen Actors Guild allowed talent to work for reduced rates in independent productions, so Boyd could not afford SAG actors. He would have to find a non-union cast.

Despite this challenge, *Paradise Park* still wound up with a cast of marquee names. Boyd got *Grand Ole Opry* legend Porter Wagoner to play the governor of West Virginia. Pro wrestling icon Dusty Rhodes played a Kanawha County deputy. Silent film star Lina Basquette, who'd worked with Cecil B. DeMille and Frank Capra as a young woman, played Nada. The role of trailer park resident LaMarr was played by the recently paroled country star Johnny Paycheck.

Shooting began in June 1991. "I was screwed from the beginning," Boyd says. The cast and crew had just 19 days to get everything they needed, but it rained for the first three days, putting the production far behind schedule. Boyd went to each person, apologizing and telling them he'd understand if they wanted to go home. "These people are taking their vacations. They're working for little to no money."

Each apology got the same reply. "They said, 'Danny, we're going to stay here. No matter what it takes.'"

☆ ☆ ☆

Paradise Park debuted in January 1992 with a screening in Beckley. It went on to play in 25 cities across the United States, picking up top awards at both the Houston International Film Festival and the Chicago International Film Festival. After Boyd screened the film in Moscow, it aired on Russian television.

The film received overwhelmingly positive press coverage. Wagoner had Boyd on his TV show *Nashville's Opry Backstage* to promote the movie. Basquette's return to the screen received attention from *The Hollywood Reporter*, the magazine *American Film*, and *The Los Angeles Times*. Rhodes' film debut was covered in *Superstar Wrestlers* and *World Championship Wrestling Magazine*. Paycheck was covered in *The Tennessean*.

Yet *Paradise Park* would be Boyd's last feature film. Despite its critical acclaim, the film didn't sell. The home video bubble was beginning to deflate. The distributor who'd picked up *Paradise Park* didn't do anything with the film, then dropped it altogether. Boyd tried to distribute it himself but lacked the resources to effectively promote it. Another distributor tried its luck in 1996, even retitling the film *Heroes of the Heart* to gin up more publicity. The movie still did not catch on. One of the investors eventually repossessed the rights. The film faded into such obscurity that even a talented Google sleuth would have had trouble finding a copy.

Boyd moved on. He taught film at West Virginia State University. He spent time in Tanzania as a Fulbright Scholar, helping students make public service films about the AIDS crisis. He trained to become a professional wrestler, competing under the ring name Professor Danger. He adapted *Chillers* into two volumes of graphic novels before penning two comic book series, *Carbon* and *Salt*.

But Boyd's "hillbilly opera" was not completely forgotten. For years, Beckley businessman Scott Hill gave the same answer any time someone asked for his favorite movie: *Paradise Park*. He had attended the film's first Charleston screening back in 1992 with his mother. "We didn't see eye to eye a lot of times. That's one time I can look back and say we both really enjoyed that," Hill says.

He finally met Boyd in 2015, when the filmmaker attended Hill's annual Rocket Boys Festival in Beckley. Hill confessed his love for *Paradise Park*. "I said, 'You know, you could own it,'" Boyd says.

Hill and his wife agreed that, if they made a profit on that year's festival, they would buy the rights to *Paradise Park*. He admits his wife probably did not put much thought into the matter, since the festival had never made a profit in its 17-year existence. But sure enough, there was money left after the bills were paid and Hill bought the rights. "This thing came together like it was directed by God," he says.

He originally intended to re-release the film on DVD. Then he had a better idea.

In 2014, Hill became the general manager of the struggling Theatre West Virginia. After nearly four decades of producing outdoor dramas at the Cliffside Theatre in the former Grandview State Park, the group had shut down in 2013 due to growing costs and a stagnant cash flow. But with Hill at the helm, the company returned the following season and has been clawing its way to financial security ever since.

As part of his plan for the company's continued success, Hill wanted an all-new original production, the kind of show Theatre West Virginia had built its reputation on with *Honey in the Rock* in the 1960s and *Hatfields and McCoys* in the '70s. He asked Boyd in fall 2016 to adapt *Paradise Park* for the stage.

Boyd was intrigued—he'd never written anything for live theater and liked the idea of returning to the world of *Paradise Park*. "I always loved the story and thought it needed a new life." But he would need someone to write the songs and music. Shortly after Hill asked him to take on the project, Boyd called Larry Groce, pitching him the idea over chips and salsa at their favorite Mexican restaurant.

Theatre West Virginia wanted to debut the musical in spring 2018. Groce was worried about writing so many songs in such a short amount of time. Once he got started, however, the lyrics flowed from his pen. He wound up writing 11 original songs for the musical, including two older but never-released compositions, two new versions of the movie's theme song, and a song originally written for the movie by Boyd and Groce.

The stage production follows the same basic plot as the movie but digs much deeper into the characters' psyches and backstories, because songs allow them to express themselves in ways dialogue does not. In the movie, for example, Nada's fantasy involves winning fortune, respect, and world peace on a West Virginia Lottery game show. But in the play, she picks numbers for a lottery ticket with a song called "The Numbers Game." "If you go to somebody who's filling out a lottery ticket, in the vast majority of cases, the numbers they choose are not random numbers. They stand for something," Groce says.

Revisiting the story, Boyd realized it's as relevant as it was in 1992. "When Larry and I sat down and watched it, we said, 'Holy cow, nothing's changed except some hairstyles,'" he says. "Twenty-seven years later and it's the same—teacher issues, huckster politics, all of it."

Paradise Park: The Musical will open on June 15 at Grandview and will run for 14 performances, the last on July 1. *theatrewestvirginia.org*

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COURTESY OF MARTIN WACH

Tiny Homes, Big Change

Ideas for tiny houses and urban gardens grow on Wheeling Island.

written by JENNIFER SKINNER

Retirement gives people time to explore new passions. Some choose fly fishing. Others take up oil painting. But Martin Wach's post-retirement passion is transforming the face of Wheeling Island with tiny houses. "All I wanted to do was open up the conversation," he says. "Instead, I opened up a Pandora's box."

Big Idea

Wach's tiny house endeavors began when he and his wife, Delia Wach—co-authors of nine published children's books—retired to Wheeling. Wach noticed the incredibly fertile ground on Wheeling Island, west of downtown Wheeling in the Ohio River, and deemed it the perfect place to build a garden. But because Wheeling Island is in a floodplain, building a permanent home didn't seem like the best idea. Property values on the island are low, but new construction comes with hefty insurance costs.

Then an idea popped into Delia Wach's mind. What if people on the island lived

in small, portable, manufactured "tiny houses" that could be quickly and easily moved when water levels rise? And what if, on those plots of land, home owners could take advantage of the fertile ground and grow their own food in tiny gardens?

The Wachs did some research and found this concept had been done before. A similar project in Detroit brought tiny houses and farmland right into the city and is considered by some to be the first urban "agrihood" in the country. "There's so much open land in these cities where there was once a factory or houses that had to be torn down, and no one knows what to do with it. We figured out what to do with it, and it's turned out to be pretty cool," Wach says.

The houses Wach is considering begin as shells manufactured by Amish craftsmen in Ohio and Pennsylvania. His vision is that, once the shell is purchased and placed on the lot on Wheeling Island, local workers will finish and furnish the home. All of the houses are built with either wheels or pontoons to adapt quickly to rising waters.

Economically, tiny houses provide a lot for a little. Wach estimates a typical mortgage on one of his tiny houses would be less than $700 a month—which, in Wheeling, makes owning a home cheaper than paying rent. "The land is cheap and the houses are great but inexpensive, and you get to do a little farming, and it's one minute from downtown," Wach says.

COURTESY OF MARTIN WACH

Growing a Movement

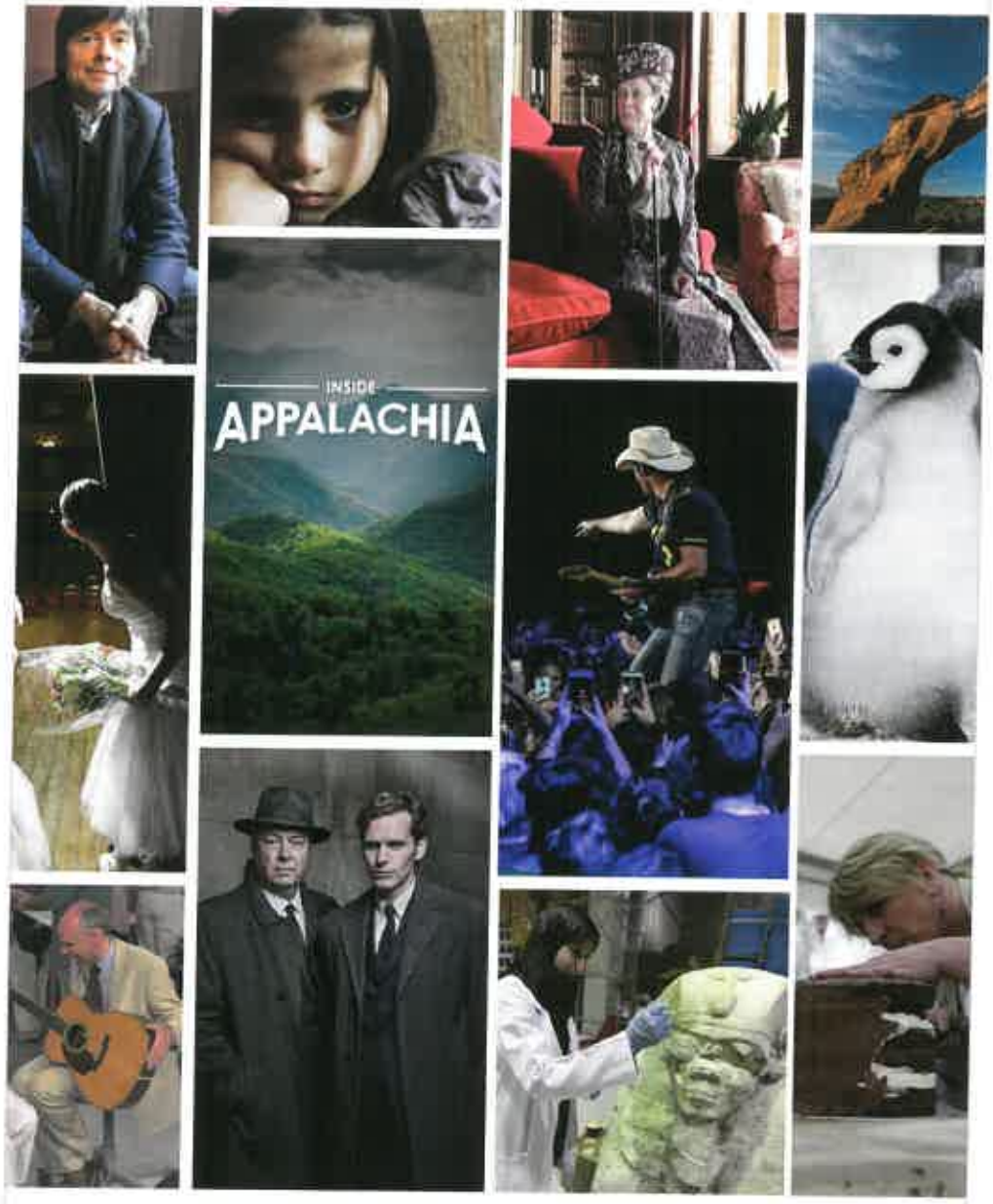
Some of Wach's tiny house plans have come to fruition. He and Delia have a home on Wheeling Island, which they use as an office and storage for their garden. Wach is also working with a local church to install a tiny house for anyone in need of a temporary place to stay.

But he's still working to get community members and local government officials on board with his larger plans. Some have argued that a bundle of tiny houses could drop property values. Wach doesn't think that will happen. He based his proposed zoning model on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, and reasons that, if tiny houses for low-income workers don't affect property values of multi-million-dollar homes there, tiny houses on Wheeling Island will not hurt property values here. "It's not just tiny houses; it's affordable houses," he says.

Wach has gone through meeting after meeting with city government over the past year. For his plan to go forward, city council has to pass an ordinance that would allow the development of tiny houses on the island. But that decision has yet to be made.

Until then, Wach will continue with his gardening efforts on Wheeling Island. The combination of fertile soil, open land, temperate weather, and low elevation allows for nearly year-long gardening. Wach hires people who are blind and mentally challenged to help in his gardens, using strings with knots, chimes, and herbs to mark his plots. The result? Abundant and efficient produce. "I've never farmed on anything better to grow things on," Wach says. "I've never seen anything grow tomatoes and vegetables like this."

There are many similarities between Wach's garden and his plans for a tiny home community—the soil is fertile and ready; it's just going to take some time before anything sprouts. "I've learned you have to be in it for the long haul," Wach says. "But I've lived all over the world, and I can't say I've loved living anywhere else more than right here."



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View from the Top

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Friday

First stop, Main Street. Check out the **Weirton Area Museum and Cultural Center** to learn about Weirton's steel industry and the major motion pictures—*The Deer Hunter*, *Reckless*, and *Super 8*—that have used the town as a backdrop for on-screen action. Then head over to the **Top of West Virginia Convention and Visitors Bureau**, where you'll find a well-stocked gallery featuring the work of local artists.

End the day by catching a free concert at the **Weirton Event Center**, which hosts outdoor performances each Friday from Memorial Day until September. The performances are eclectic: One week you might see former *American Idol* contestant Gabby Barrett, another week it might be the Wheeling Symphony Orchestra.

For dinner, check out **Theo Yianni's** with its authentic Greek food, from stuffed grape leaves and spanakopita to gyro sandwiches and souvlaki platters. Or head to **Dee Jay's Ribs & Grille**, a favorite hangout for Pittsburgh pro sports teams—the Penguins hockey team once took the Stanley Cup there. For dessert there's **Gus's Goodies**, which offers cookies, cupcakes, and delectable donuts.

Saturday

Homer Laughlin China—and especially the company's famous Fiestaware line—has fans the world over. If you're among them, call ahead and reserve an hour-long tour of the **Homer Laughlin factory** in Newell, about a 30-minute drive north from Weirton. And be sure to stop by the factory's store to pick up a new addition to your collection.

For a different kind of tour, take West Virginia Route 2 south to **Family Roots Farm**. The family-owned farm offers a pick-your-own strawberry patch through June. Later in the season, you might get to see sorghum syrup being made. Family Roots also makes some of the state's best maple syrup—get a jug to take home.

If you're looking for some night life after your long day, head to the **Mountaineer Casino Racetrack & Resort** in New Cumberland. The resort is home to a world-class casino, five restaurants, and regular concerts. Horse races take place Sunday through Wednesday from May through November, but the biggest race day of all is the West Virginia Derby, coming Saturday August 4.

For dinner, head to **Drover's Inn** in Wellsburg. Built in 1848, it has served as an inn, a general store, and a post office but is now a warm and welcoming restaurant serving classic pub food. Be sure to try Drover's wings and stop at the downstairs tavern—originally a fruit cellar—for a beer or mixed drink.

Sunday

Sunday is the day of rest. So, before heading home, take some time to relax at **Tomlinson Run State Park** in New Manchester. The park offers six hiking trails, a swimming pool, a miniature golf course, and areas for camping, picnicking, basketball, and volleyball. For a little fun on the water, head to the park's lake for fishing and paddleboating.

If you'd prefer to hit the links, check out the par-3 golf course at **Wellsburg's Brooke Hills Park**. Or head to the nearby **Highland Springs Golf Course**, where you can tee off in West Virginia and putt out in Pennsylvania.

No trip to the Top of West Virginia is complete without a visit to the **World's Largest Teapot** in Chester. Standing 14 feet high and measuring 14 feet in diameter, this classic tourist trap has earned write-ups on websites like Roadside America and Atlas Obscura as well as in *The West Virginia Encyclopedia*. On Saturday, August 11, Chester will mark its annual Teapot Day, celebrating the town's landmark with food and entertainment.

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THE HISTORIC SARAH MILLER HOUSE in downtown Wellsburg offers three stately rooms in a historic home overlooking the Ohio River. *900 Main Street Wellsburg, 304.737.0647 @sarahmillerhousewellsburgwv on Facebook*

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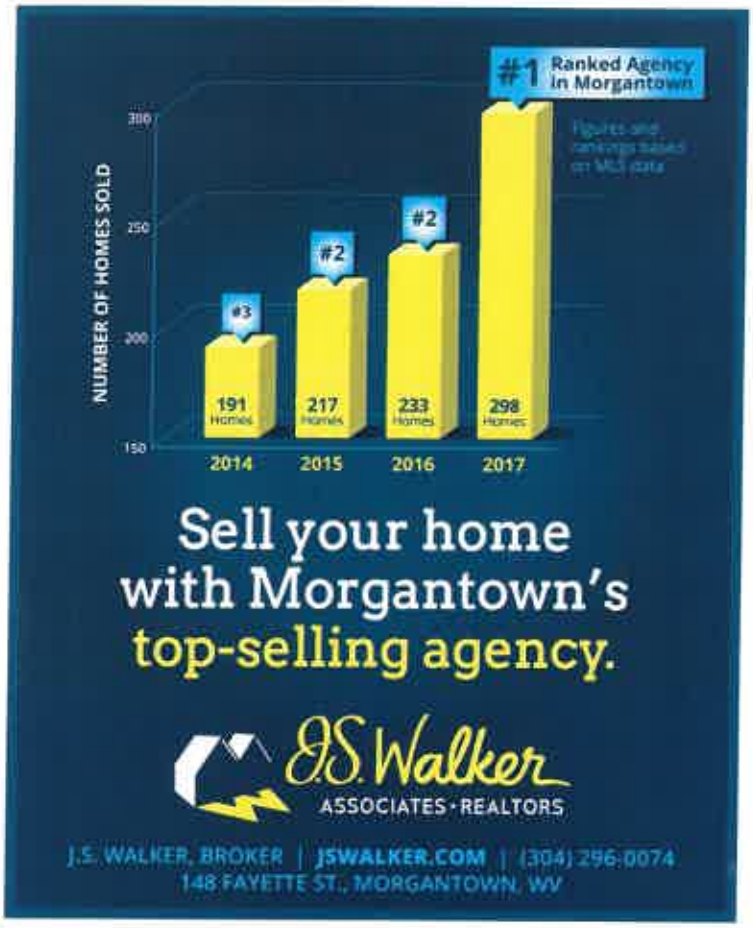
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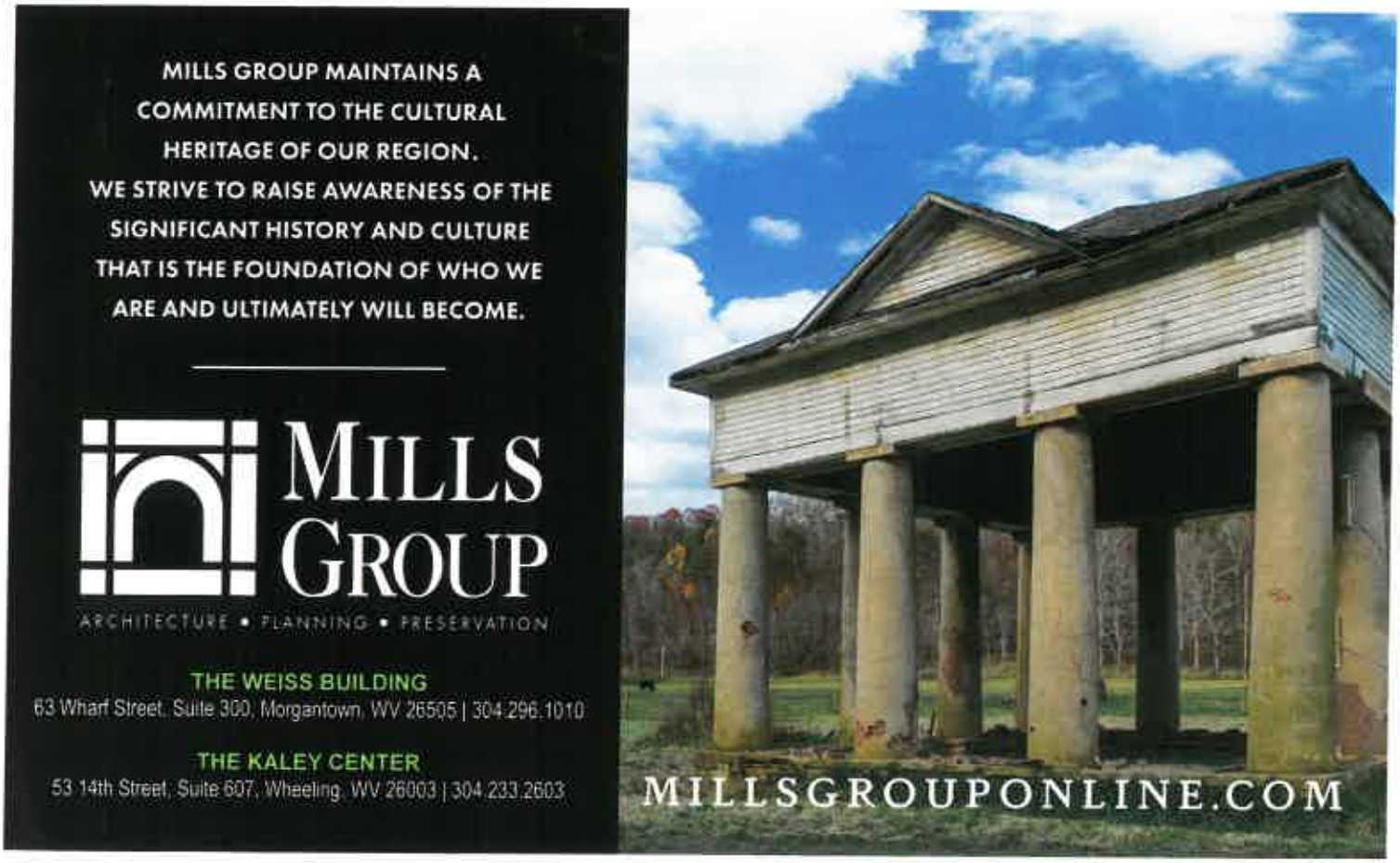
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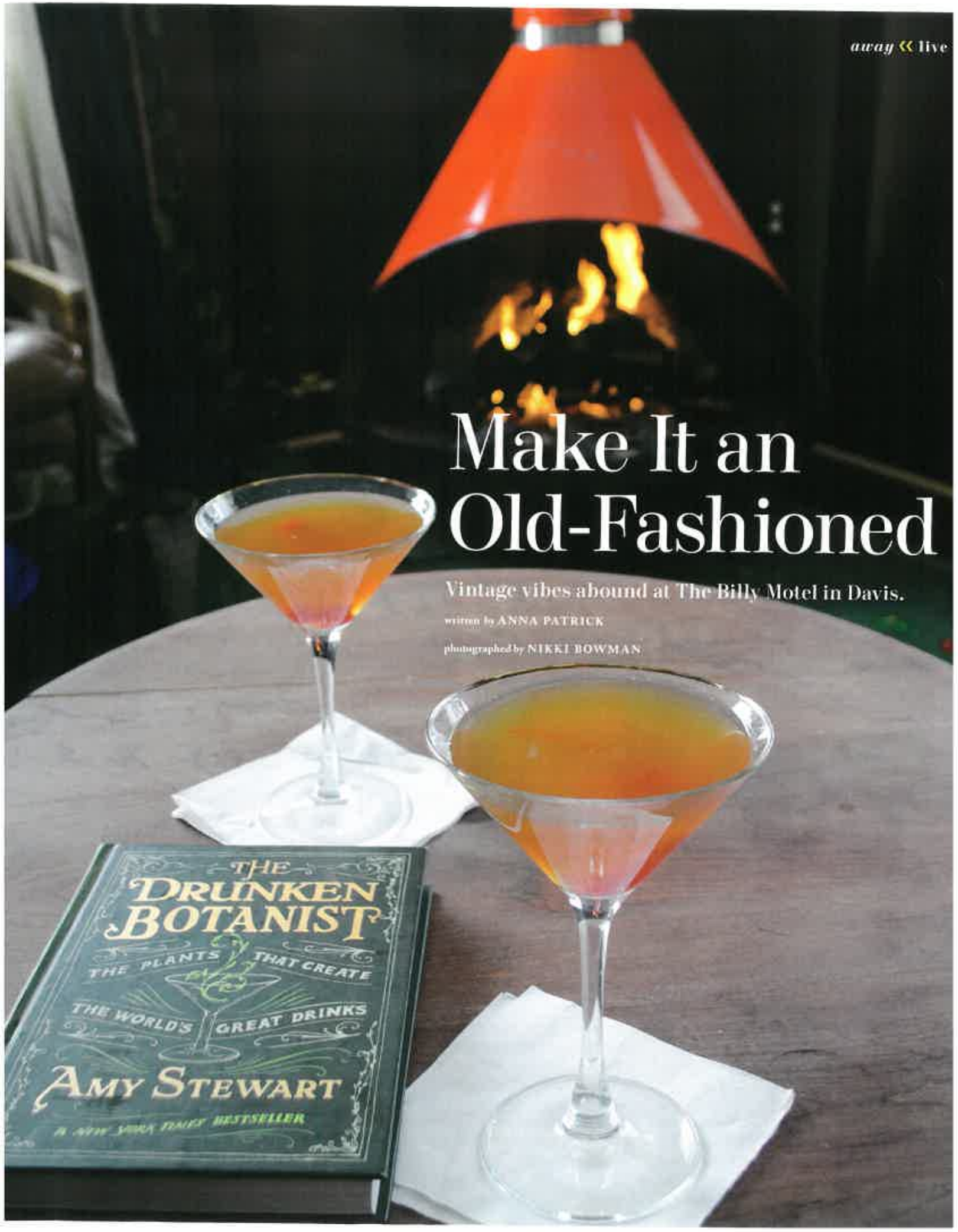


Make It an Old-Fashioned

Vintage vibes abound at The Billy Motel in Davis.

written by ANNA PATRICK

photographed by NIKKI BOWMAN

Joy Malinowski remembers how the women on her street, friends of her mother, would dress up their homes interiors. Jewel tones in greens and blues. Brass and gold. Deeply colored, intricately patterned rugs. It was a reflection of the decorating style sweeping living rooms in her Ohio suburb in the 1960s: "oriental."

Malinowski uses the outdated word with caution, but it's the best way she's found to explain the classic Asian design elements that have inspired the look and feel of the lobby and bar of her newest endeavour, The Billy Motel.

Situated along the edge of West Virginia Route 32, The Billy Motel is the final establishment to greet passersby heading northwest out of Davis, Tucker County, on their way to Thomas. Malinowski bought the mid-century building in 2015 and spent about a year working to return it to its original form, opening the small, 10-room motel in July 2016.

Serving as a bookend to a long row of rooms lined in carnival lights, The Billy's lobby, which also serves as a bar, has become the center of this little motel's life. Malinowski designed the space to look just like a cozy, dimly lit living rooms from her childhood with plenty of comfy, leather-backed wooden chairs and a cushy velvet sofa of mid-century modern design. The concrete floor has been painted to look like an old oriental rug. In one corner, there's a bright red–orange mid-century stove with an angular, squat mouth. A print of "Chinese Girl"—Vladimir Tretchikoff's 1952 painting of a young Chinese woman with bright red lips and a blue–green face—hangs on the wall.

> "There's just something nice and a bit old-fashioned about the bar at the motel."
>
> JOY MALINOWSKI

Each night, the bartender piloting this tiny time capsule is there to greet guests and check them into their rooms while also whipping up cocktails. The Billy has become known among locals and tourists alike for its large offering of specialty cocktails—a rare luxury in a small town like Davis, which has only a handful of restaurants and a population of fewer than 700 people.

It's easy to feel like you just entered the set of *Mad Men*, sitting in a slick leather-backed chair and sipping a Leonard's Red Needle—tequila, cranberry juice, muddled lemon, and a splash of St-Germain—or a Justini, made with Tito's Vodka, dry vermouth, and olive juice. "There's just something nice and a bit old-fashioned about the bar at the motel," Malinowski says. "I just love that convenience."

Beyond the bar, The Billy offers weekenders a hip place to stay. With minimal furnishings, the rooms are designed for folks who are planning to be out and about throughout the day, taking a hike in Dolly Sods or visiting Blackwater Falls or strolling down Front Street in Thomas. There are no dressers or refrigerators or writing desks—just comfy chairs and big, soft beds to land in after a long day of exploring.

Instead of a fridge, The Billy provides a little cooler to keep guests' drinks cold. Beds are made up with cotton linens and down comforters. And instead of offering a full lineup of cable channels, each room features a smart TV connected to streaming services like Netflix.

And one of the favorite ammenities in each room? The two drink tokens awaiting guests. There is no better way to celebrate your arrival than with a round on the house. *1080 William Avenue, 304.851.6125, thebillymotel.com @thebillymotel on Facebook*

VISIT Greene Pastures

Just a 30-minute drive from Morgantown, a trip to Greene County, Pennsylvania, is a journey to a simpler time. This is farm country, where the traditions go back generations. But you don't have to be a native to participate in the fun.

Small Towns, Big Fun

Located in the southwestern corner of Pennsylvania, Greene County is made up of 26 municipalities, including the county seat of Waynesburg Borough. Visit the county's historical treasures—such as its century-old covered bridges, 7 Mail Pouch barns, and 7 old-timey general stores—and find yourself face-to-face with the past. Visit its farms and vineyards, and enjoy the fruit of its soil. The county's many fairs and festivals offer activities that will appeal to any member of your family, and you'll end the day tired, suntanned, and with a new friend or two. You just might find your quick weekend escape leaves you longing to return again and again.

History Comes Alive

The **Greene County History Museum** in Waynesburg contains, among other exhibits, a reconstructed cabin, a railroad house, and a printing press. "The exhibits aren't behind ropes or barriers. They want the people to embrace it," says Greene County tourism director JoAnne Marshall. The museum will unveil an old-timey barber shop exhibit in July. In Rices Landing, the **W. A. Young and Sons Foundry and Machine Shop**—boarded up after World War II—has been meticulously restored and is open every Sunday afternoon for demonstrations. "There's not a single building like that in the nation," Marshall says.

Explore Agriculture

Thistlethwaite Vineyards in Jefferson grows 10 varieties of French hybrid grapes to produce a selection of red and white wines, which visitors can sample at the vineyards' tasting room. The **Shields Demesne Winery** in Spraggs offers 16 varieties of melomels—a traditional European-style wine made with grapes and honey—aged in bourbon barrels. And, if you're looking to make some fuzzy friends, call ahead for a tour of **Lippencott Alpacas** in Waynesburg.

Thrills and Excitement

High Point Raceway in Mount Morris is one of the nation's top venues for motocross and ATV racing. And, because of the way the track is laid out, there's no bad spot to watch. **Flashlight Drags** at the Greene County Airport allows anyone to get in on "street racing without the jail time." For a different kind of autosports, check out the **Lucas Oil Mega Pull**, coming to the Greene County Fairgrounds on September 8, where high-powered trucks and tractors tear down dirt tracks.

Events

Greene County hosts more summertime events than we have space to print. But here are a few of our favorites:

JACKTOWN FAIR | July 17–21
Wind Ridge's biggest celebration offers livestock competitions, two nights of rodeo, truck and tractor pulls, live entertainment, and a carnival. The event kicks off with a huge parade with dozens of elaborate floats—residents along the parade route even decorate their homes for the events.

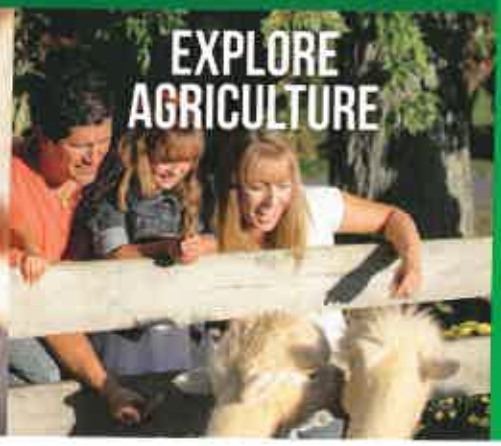
RAIN DAY | July 29
This Waynesburg tradition dates to the 1870s, when a farmer noticed it always rained on July 29. This grew into a celebration with entertainment, a craft fair, food, and an umbrella decorating contest. For the record, it has rained 115 of the last 144 years.

GREENE COUNTY FAIR | August 5–11
The county fair features livestock and home and garden contests, a petting zoo, carnival rides, and plenty of food vendors. Be sure to check out the demolition derbies—there will be two this year—and harness racing, which is something like a modern version of chariot racing.

VISITGREENE.ORG

VISIT GREENE

www.VisitGreene.org
1-877-280-8687



Just minutes north of Morgantown!

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 14-17 High Point Pro Motocross National
High Point Raceway, Mt. Morris

July 17-21 Jacktown Fair
Jacktown Fairgrounds, Wind Ridge

July 29 Rain Day Festival
Downtown Historic Waynesburg

August 5-11 Greene County Fair
Greene County Fairgrounds, Waynesburg

August 18-25 Bituminous Coal Show
Carmichaels & Cumberland Twp. VFD

August 25-26 Mason-Dixon Frontier Festival
Mason-Dixon Park PA, Mt. Morris

September 1 Art Blast on the Mon
Ice Plant Pavilion, Greensboro

September 8 50's Fest & Car Cruise
Downtown Historic Waynesburg

September 8 Lucas Oil Mega Pull
Greene County Fairgrounds, Waynesburg

September 15-16 Covered Bridge Festival
Greene Academy, Carmichaels Covered Bridge
State Game Lands 223, White Covered Bridge

T-Th: 11 am - 2 pm
4 pm - 10 pm
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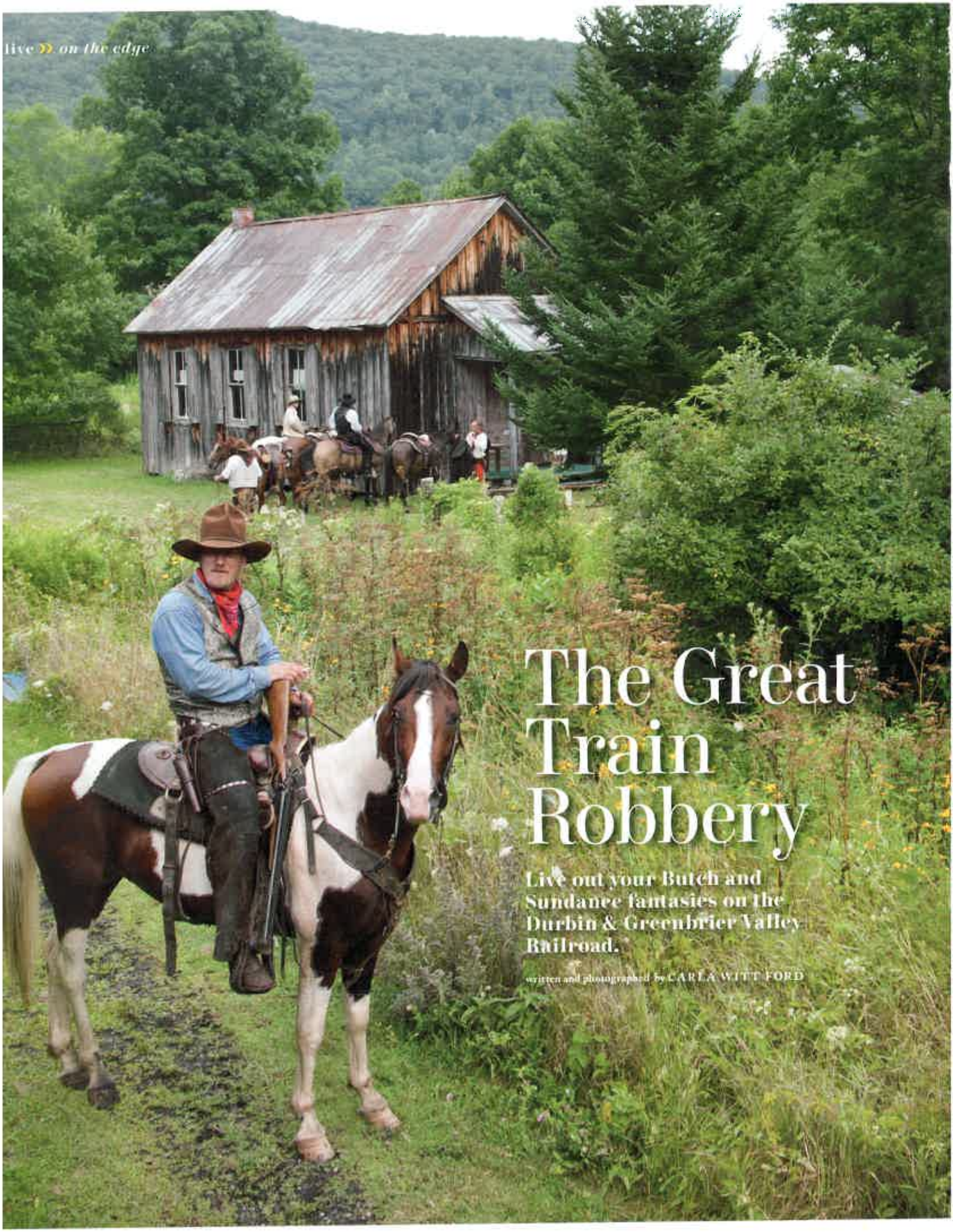

The Great Train Robbery

Live out your Butch and Sundance fantasies on the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad.

written and photographed by CARLA WITT FORD

I love a good train ride through the West Virginia hills. There's nothing better—until you add horses, train robbers, and plenty of excitement.

While staying at Snowshoe Resort last summer, my daughter, Olivia, and I were planning a daytime excursion and found the Wild West Weekend on the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad. We purchased our tickets online and made our way down the mountain to the town of Durbin, in Pocahontas County. We parked beside the train station, which is in the middle of town, and admired the bright yellow depot as well as the coal-fired steam engine huffing impatiently to begin its 10-and-a-half-mile journey along the Greenbrier River.

We were greeted by the sheriff and his men, all dressed head to toe in Western wear, sidearms and shotguns completing their outfits. They seemed to be quite capable of guarding the mail bag, packages, and the padlocked trunk—I'm guessing it was the railroad's payroll—I could see behind them. We hurried to our seats and waited to be part of this great adventure. With a long blow of the Durbin Rocket's whistle, we were on our way.

Ladies in hooped skirts and feathered hats talked with passengers, some of whom had clearly taken this train before, as they were also wearing Western-style clothes and had plastic guns holstered at their sides. Everyone was enjoying the day—until two reenactors stood up and one hollered "Draw!"

Olivia and I thought it was time for a train heist, but the men were able to settle their argument without "gunfire" as the train reached the midpoint of our journey. The Rocket is in reverse during the first half of the journey, with the engine pushing the train cars and caboose to the end of the line. After a short break, we were on our way back toward the depot.

As we approached a clearing on the return trip, someone shouted a warning to the lawmen. There were men on horses following the train. Time for

Dressed in Western wear from head to toe, these reenactors are ready for anything. If the guns weren't enough, they had a supply of "dynamite" ready to go.

The Wild West Weekend is full of thrills, including shoot-outs and a train robbery. Everyone participates in this fun adventure, including the children. Reenactors perform old-timey songs for the return trip to the depot.

the real action. I won't spoil your trip by telling you all the details, but know this: Guests are right in the middle of the action. We witnessed talented horsemanship, reenactors completely into their roles, choreographed stunts—all of it transporting us back to a different time.

Once the smoke cleared and the mail, money, and cargo were safe, a few of the reenactors sang and played some old-timey songs for us. Traveling back to the depot, the romantic part of me wanted to linger in that slower-paced place with train travel, hooped skirts, and Wild West thrills. It was nice to travel back in time for an afternoon.

Four trips are scheduled during this year's Wild West Weekend, August 4 and 5. You'd better be quick on the draw—the train trip is quite popular with train and Western enthusiasts, so tickets sell out fast.
4759 Staunton Parkersburg Turnpike, Durbin, 304.636.9477, mountainrailway.com

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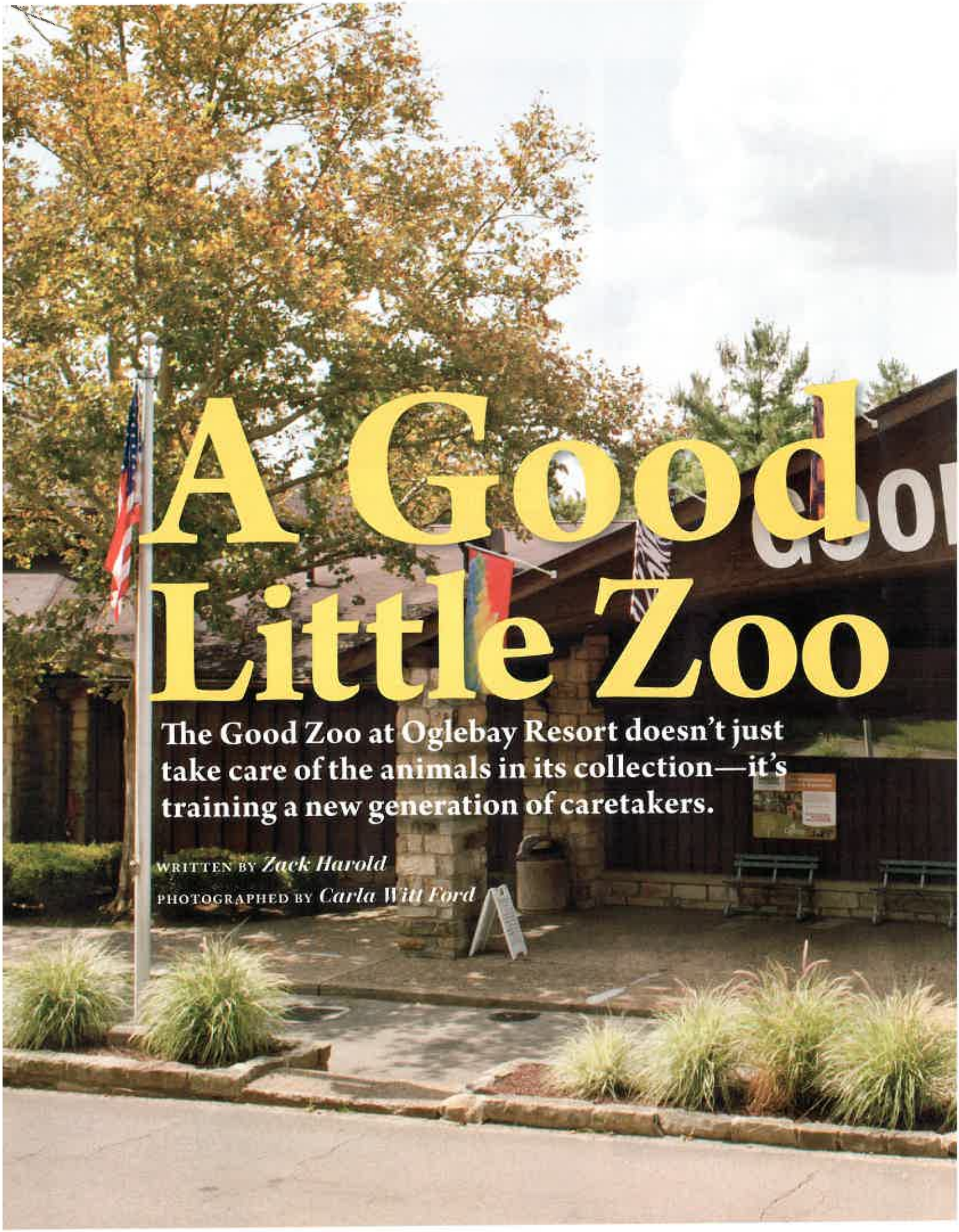


A Good Little Zoo

The Good Zoo at Oglebay Resort doesn't just take care of the animals in its collection—it's training a new generation of caretakers.

WRITTEN BY *Zack Harold*

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Carla Witt Ford*

ZOO
Good Zoo
Benedum
Theatre

Joe Greathouse is careful not to touch the electric fence as he snatches a Doritos bag out of the ostrich's reach. Touching the charged wire would not be pleasant. He knows from experience.

Greathouse is the director of the Good Zoo, located on the grounds of the Oglebay Resort in Wheeling. In addition to managing the 53-person staff, overseeing the well-being of around 300 animals, reviewing guests' TripAdvisor and Google reviews, and a million other things, Greathouse also has an eye for the minutiae. Like keeping junk food away from large African birds.

He leaves the ostrich enclosure behind, deposits the chip bag in a trash can, and follows the loop of blacktop past the kangaroos and wallabies. He stops to trill at the laughing kookaburra, which responds with a long and impressive cackle. "It just *sounds* like a zoo," Greathouse says, smiling. Then he moves on to the enclosure for Malika, the park's lone serval.

She is lounging like a housecat in one corner of her enclosure and, true to her feline nature, regards Greathouse coolly as he takes a look around. He notices Malika's informational placard needs to be cleaned and the ground around it needs some mulch. He opens the Notes app on his chunky-cased iPhone and taps out a reminder.

Greathouse's phone made its first appearance of the morning in the zoo's veterinary care building. After stopping to speak with the West Liberty University students cleaning out a crate that recently held a cheetah—the zoo maintains a close relationship with the school, employing more than 80 students as apprentices and interns—he poked his head into the holding area for newborn zoo animals. The pen was empty but wasn't tidy enough for Greathouse. Someone would have to take care of that. Apologizing for the interruption, he whipped out the phone and made a note.

After leaving Malika, Greathouse heads to the enclosure next door to see the zoo's ring-tailed lemurs, Patrick and Zena. As he feeds them raisins, a mother and two small children pass by. The kids point and jabber at the tiny primates munching on Great Value raisins as well as the big primate who somehow got inside their cage. Greathouse understands their excitement. A native of Cumberland, Maryland, he grew up visiting the Good Zoo and marveling at its inhabitants. He later interned here while attending West Virginia University. He got hired as a zookeeper after graduation and worked his way up to registrar and then curator. He left for a while to work at The Wilds in eastern Ohio. But, as Greathouse now admits, "it wasn't quite home." He returned to the Good Zoo as executive director in 2016.

The Good Zoo is named for the family of Wheeling department store magnate and philanthropist Laurance F. Good and his wife Barbara. They made the initial donation in memory of their son Philip, who died in 1971 at the age of seven.

Soon, the Oglebay Foundation had thousands of donations rolling in. Families wrote checks. School children collected pennies. The donations came so large and so

TOP *Joe Greathouse, director of the Good Zoo in Wheeling, allows the Malika, the zoo's serval, to climb on his back.*

BOTTOM *The zoo's ring-tailed lemurs are especially popular with young visitors.*

fast that the foundation increased the zoo's planned footprint from 10 to 32 acres. Construction broke ground in 1972 and the zoo opened five years later, fittingly enough, on Memorial Day weekend. Now, the Good Zoo is the only zoo in West Virginia accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the strictest and most coveted accreditation in the zoo world.

Greathouse now ducks inside the red panda enclosure, which the animals share with two goral, a type of Chinese goat. It isn't long before he produces the iPhone again. The brown-painted aluminum band around one of the trees has come loose and needs to be tightened. The metal is meant to prevent the pandas from climbing up and out of their home, although that's mostly a concern for Junji, an 8-year-old male. The park's other red panda, a 14-year-old female named Amber, isn't much of a climber since she came down with Parkinson's disease.

This is one complication of zoo life. While animals live much longer in human care (zoo people do not use the word "captivity"), those prolonged lives lead to geriatric diseases never seen in the wild such as arthritis, cancer, or, in Amber's case, neurological disorders. Parkinson's affects red pandas in much the same way as humans, causing tremors and decreased motor function. Amber mostly gets along fine—after munching the prunes Greathouse gave her, she backed away and stumbled over a branch—but the zookeepers keep a close eye on her health. At what point will quantity of life overtake quality of life? It's an unfortunate arithmetic, but one familiar to anyone caring for an aging animal. "As long as quality of life is still good, we're going to take care of them," Greathouse says.

***

West Liberty associate professor Zac Loughman was knee-deep in a creek, showing a student how to catch snakes for a research project, when he received a call from the biology department. A man from the U.S. Department of Agriculture had stopped by for the school's first-ever surprise inspection of its animal habitat.

The zoo science program has more than 100 critters in its collection, the vast majority of which are reptiles, Loughman's speciality. But the USDA only cares about warm-blooded animals, so the inspector was there to check the enclosure and commissary area for the school's lone mammal: a Linnaeus's two-toed sloth named Sweetpea.

Sweetpea is something of a mascot for West Liberty's Zoo Science and Applied Conservation program. Like some kind of hairy Jerry West, her silhouette adorns the program's logo, appearing on handouts, t-shirts, and classroom walls. She lives in a former chemistry lab, which the biology department remodeled into a zoo science laboratory with six animal enclosures.

The animals are an essential selling point for the young program, which started in the 2016–17 academic year. There are four other zoo science programs in the United States, but as Loughman points out, "we're the only program that, by the end of your first week, you're working with animals. It's one thing to learn about animals and another to interact with and know animals."

Students work rotating shifts caring for the animals, tracking the creatures' well-being using the same computer system found at many zoos. "It is not glamorous," says Karen Kettler, chairwoman of the biology department. "It's teaching students there are amazing moments among the monotony. And that there's value in the monotony."

On this day, the monotony has paid off. Loughman left the creek and hurried back to meet the inspector. Less than an hour later, he appeared in Kettler's office, still dressed in the shorts and sandals he'd been wearing in the field. He offered her a thumbs-up. Their facility passed the inspection with flying colors.

Word spread fast among the program's students, who were also clearly anxious about the outcome of the

ZACK HAROLD

LEFT *Sweetpea, a Linneasus's two-toed sloth, is the mascot for West Liberty University's Zoo Science and Applied Conservation program.*

RIGHT *West Liberty associate professor Zac Loughman started the zoo science program along with Joe Greathouse, who teaches at the university in addition to his duties at the Good Zoo.*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
Kenzie Guthrie, West Liberty University's animal care coordinator, holds a tegu in the school's zoo science laboratory. One of the Good Zoo's red pandas. Greathouse snuggles a baby wallaby.

inspection. It's one more slice of zoo life that Loughman, Kettler, and the rest of the staff can offer.

Once students have gained experience with the school's in-house animal collection, they can apply to work at the Good Zoo—West Liberty's program is also the only one in the country affiliated with an AZA-accredited zoo. This, too, is an essential part of the curriculum. If students want to work in zoos, "just spending a weekend at the zoo isn't good enough," Loughman says. Facilities won't hire anyone who hasn't spent hours upon hours fully immersed in zoo culture. Thanks to the school's relationship with the Good Zoo, all West Liberty students graduate with experience to spare.

***

Back at the Good Zoo, Greathouse completes his walkabout where he began, at the main building. As he nears the door, he greets a young woman heading the opposite direction. She walks a short distance down the blacktop path, then perches sideways on a metal bench just below the reindeer enclosure.

Dressed in shorts and a t-shirt, Amanda Alig might be mistaken for a zoogoer if not for the folder and notepaper on her lap. She is a West Liberty zoo science student and has come to the zoo to collect data for her senior capstone project. Today is a good day for it, with a cloudless sky and temperatures hovering in the mid '80s. "It wasn't really fun in the rain and snow," Alig says.

She chose to study the reindeer—two females named Princess and Dancer—because, when she hired on as a temporary employee around Christmas, she was assigned to the animals and grew fond of them. But more than that, Princess needs Alig's help.

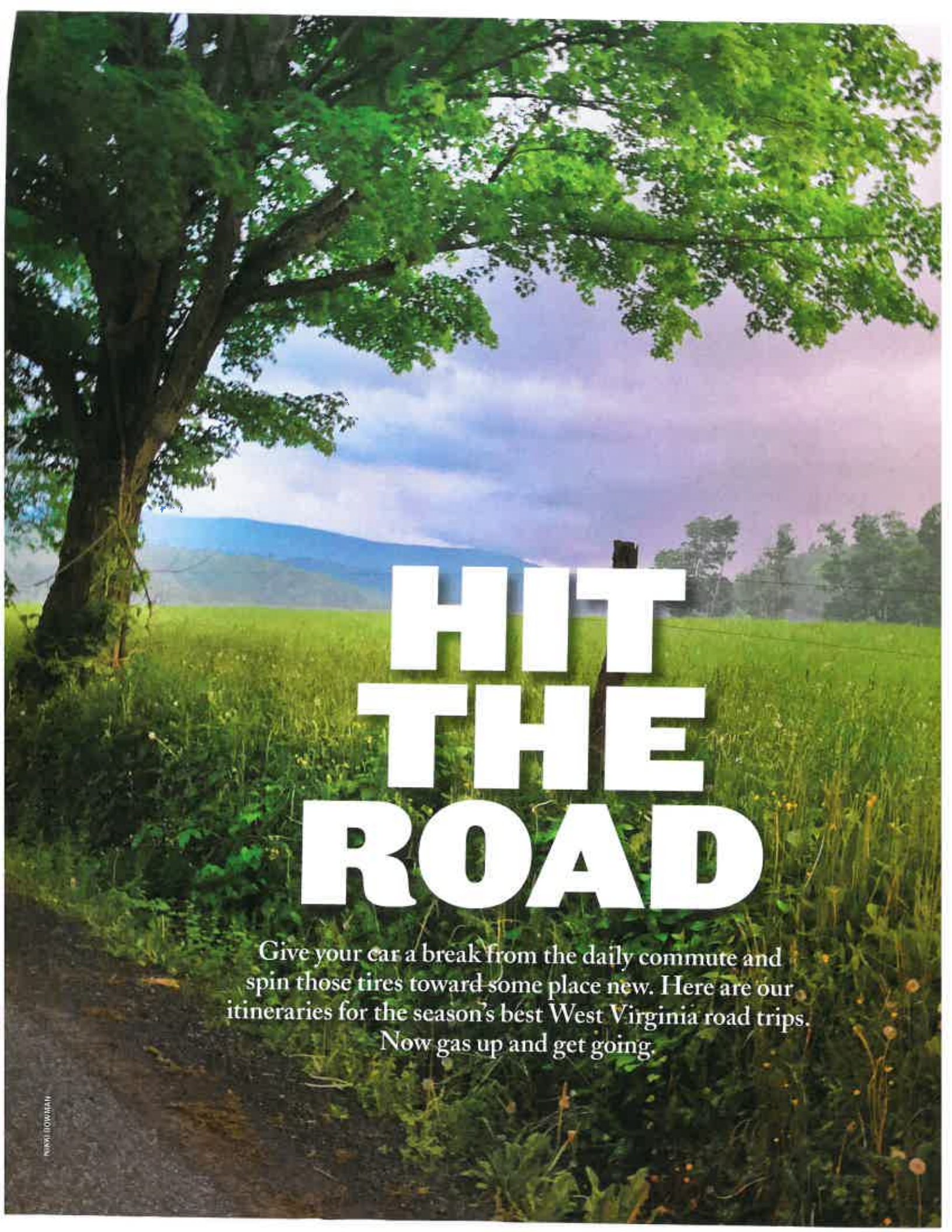
Princess and Dancer grew used to the attention of visitors over the holidays and missed the crowds when they went away. But then they got used to the quiet again and now, as the weather warms and visitors start flooding back, they have become nervous about all the humans milling about.

Princess is especially anxious, spending much of her time pacing the enclosure. Alig wants to figure out how to make that better. She tried giving her a puzzle feeder, hoping the mental challenge might distract and calm her. It didn't. She witnessed some success, however, after dumping two bags of ice inside the enclosure. "They played around and went and lay down," Alig says. "They chilled out, literally."

The relaxed behavior did not last long but Alig hopes the data she collects will help point to a permanent solution. She records the animals' every action. She takes note when Princess begins pacing in clockwise loops at the top of yard. She scribbles on the paper when she notices Princess is constantly licking her lips, which might be a sign of a side effect of the sedative shot zookeepers recently administered. Alig keeps a close eye on Princess's urine output, in case the shot might have affected that, too.

This kind of resume-building experience is invaluable for students like Alig. But the zoo benefits, too. "It keeps us on our toes and thinking about things in different ways," Greathouse says. "It's nice to have all those new ideas coming through." *465 Lodge Drive, 304.243.4030 oglebay.com/goodzoo*

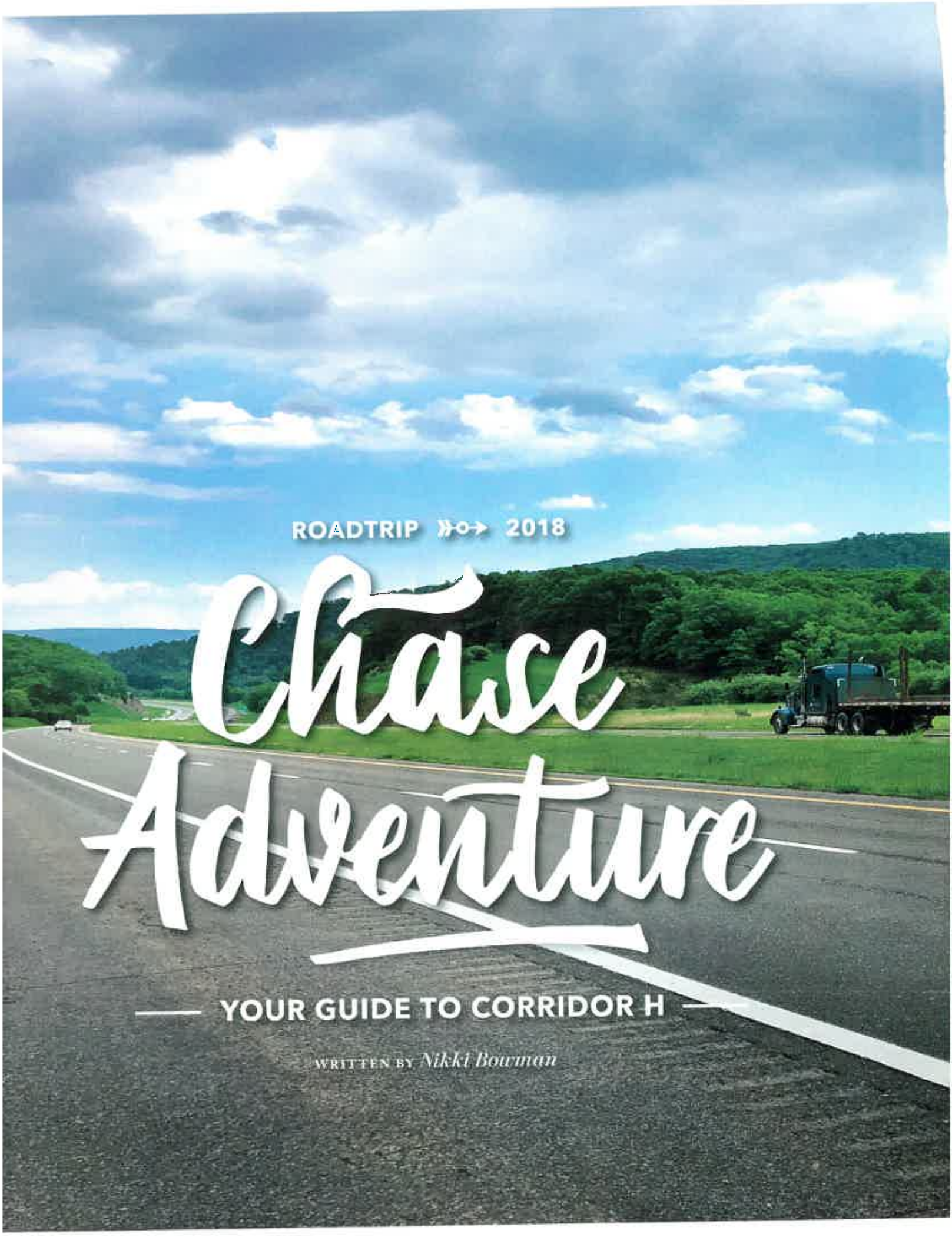
ZACK HAROLD



HIT THE ROAD

Give your car a break from the daily commute and spin those tires toward some place new. Here are our itineraries for the season's best West Virginia road trips. Now gas up and get going.

NIKKI DOWNAR



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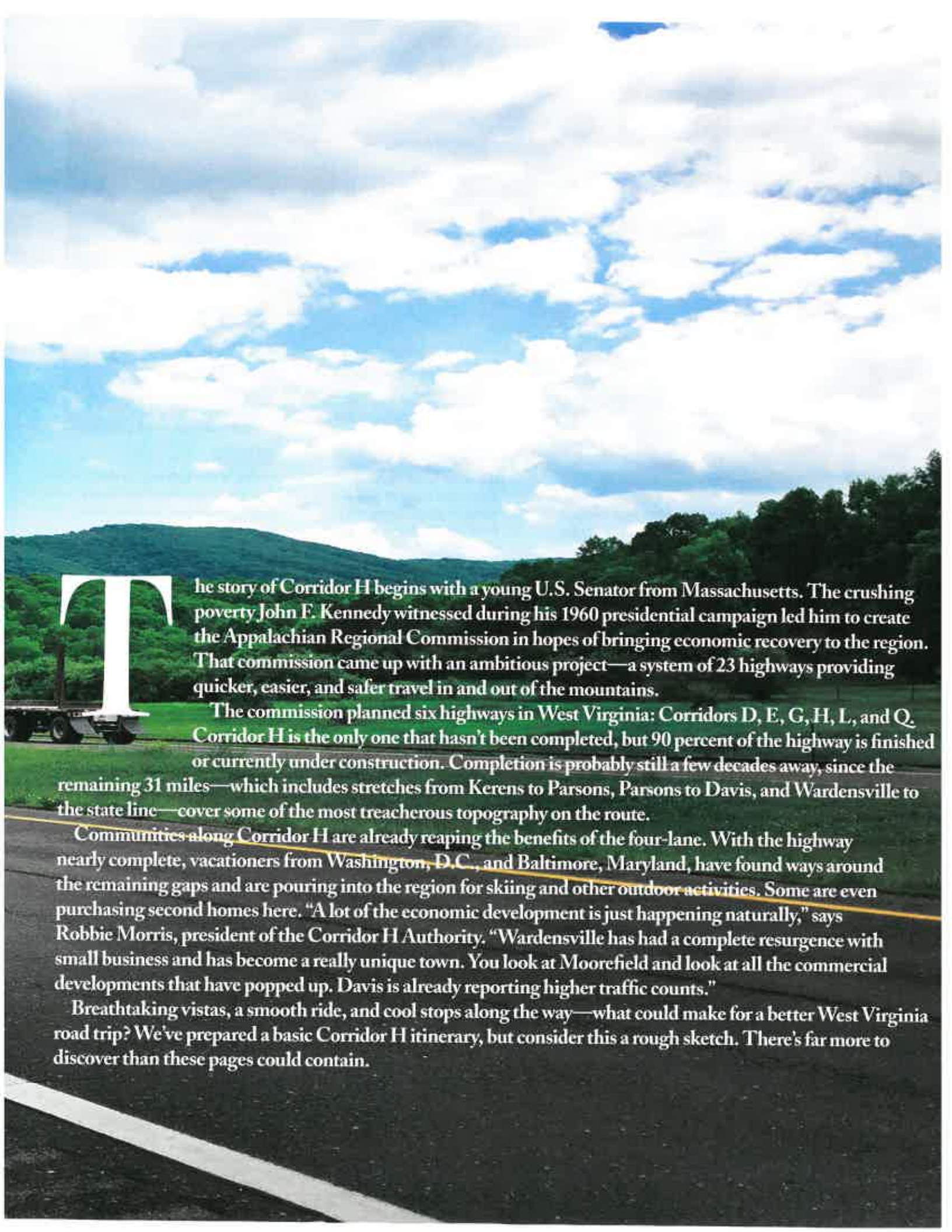
YOUR GUIDE TO CORRIDOR H

WRITTEN BY *Nikki Bowman*

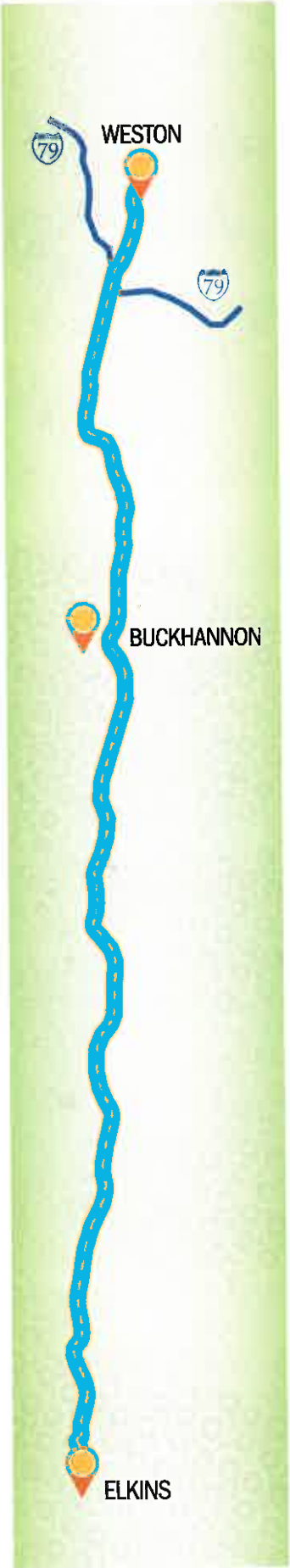


The story of Corridor H begins with a young U.S. Senator from Massachusetts. The crushing poverty John F. Kennedy witnessed during his 1960 presidential campaign led him to create the Appalachian Regional Commission in hopes of bringing economic recovery to the region. That commission came up with an ambitious project—a system of 23 highways providing quicker, easier, and safer travel in and out of the mountains.

The commission planned six highways in West Virginia: Corridors D, E, G, H, L, and Q. Corridor H is the only one that hasn't been completed, but 90 percent of the highway is finished or currently under construction. Completion is probably still a few decades away, since the remaining 31 miles—which includes stretches from Kerens to Parsons, Parsons to Davis, and Wardensville to the state line—cover some of the most treacherous topography on the route.

Communities along Corridor H are already reaping the benefits of the four-lane. With the highway nearly complete, vacationers from Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, Maryland, have found ways around the remaining gaps and are pouring into the region for skiing and other outdoor activities. Some are even purchasing second homes here. "A lot of the economic development is just happening naturally," says Robbie Morris, president of the Corridor H Authority. "Wardensville has had a complete resurgence with small business and has become a really unique town. You look at Moorefield and look at all the commercial developments that have popped up. Davis is already reporting higher traffic counts."

Breathtaking vistas, a smooth ride, and cool stops along the way—what could make for a better West Virginia road trip? We've prepared a basic Corridor H itinerary, but consider this a rough sketch. There's far more to discover than these pages could contain.



Weston

Weston is known as "Stonewall Country" because Civil War General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson grew up in the area with relatives at Jackson's Mill, a 1,500-acre estate now owned and operated by the West Virginia University Extension Service.

SHOP Get a glimpse into Weston's vibrant glassblowing past at Appalachian Glass, where you can watch a demonstration and then peruse the hand-blown creations at its colorful shop.

PLAY The Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum, the largest hand-cut stone building in North America, offers historical tours Tuesdays through Saturdays that take visitors through the history of mental health treatment. The asylum also offers ghost-hunting tours throughout the month of October.

EAT Just steps away from the asylum is Thyme Bistro. It may be unassuming on the outside, but the chef dishes out some spectacular creations.

stonewallcountry.com

Buckhannon

Home of West Virginia Wesleyan College and the West Virginia Strawberry Festival, Buckhannon is a charming historic town.

PLAY Reel in a wall hanger. The Buckhannon River has a 6-mile stretch of world-class muskie fishing.

EAT You won't starve in this town, but you might have a hard time picking just one place to eat. You can't go wrong at the 88 Restaurant & Lounge, ¾ Café, C.J. Maggie's, or Fish Hawk Acres Market.

SHOP Support area artists by shopping at Artistry on Main and then take a side trip to famed West Virginia glass blower Ron Hinkle's studio and gallery located just south of town on West Virginia Route 20.

STAY If you love the B&B experience, visit Governor's Inn or McNemar House. You won't be disappointed.

visitbuckhannon.org

Elkins

Elkins is the gateway to the Monongahela National Forest and the home of Davis & Elkins College.

DO Ride the rails with a scenic trip aboard The Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad. There are several trip packages to choose from.

SHOP The darling Delmonte Market, located across from the train station, is a shopping bonanza. For more locally made products, visit Artists at Work on Davis Avenue.

STAY The grand dame of in-town lodging is the beautifully restored Graceland Inn—a historic mansion operated by Davis & Elkins with commanding views of the surrounding mountains. The Isaac Jackson Hotel is a more modern option.

PLAY Enjoy the offerings of the Monongahela National Forest. If you are looking for indoor entertainment, check out Gandy Dancer Theater.

EAT There are several great spots to grab some grub. El Gran Sabor, C.J. Maggie's American Grill, Beanders Restaurant & Tavern, Vintage Restaurant & Wine Bar, 1863 Grill, Railyard Restaurant, and Smoke on the Water BBQ are all good options.

DRINK If you are a fan of local brews, then you know Big Timber Brewing Company has taken the state by storm. Visit its taproom in downtown Elkins.

randolphcountywv.com

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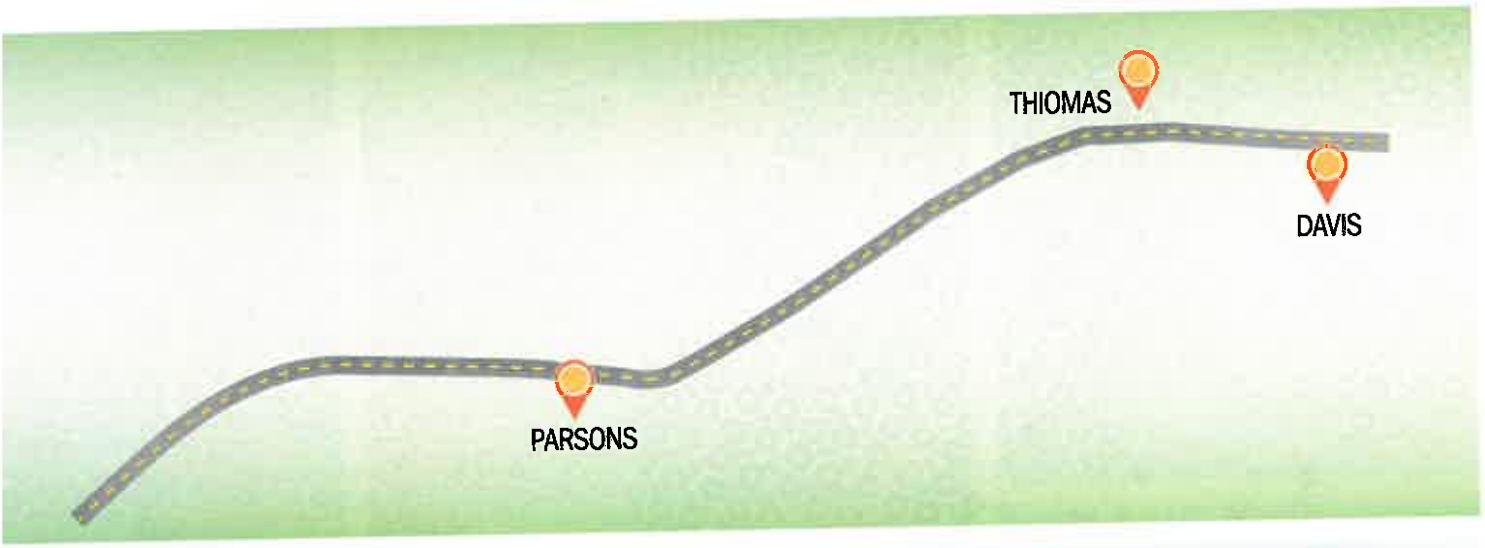


Parsons

Parsons—perched at the confluence of the Shavers Fork and Black Fork rivers that form the Cheat River—is the county seat of Tucker County. It is home to Kingsford Manufacturing Company, the world's leading manufacturer of barbecue briquettes.

STAY Five River Camp Ground is the perfect location for kayaking and fishing the Cheat River. The annual bluegrass festival Pickin' in Parsons is held at this immaculate campground.

PLAY Blackwater Outdoor Adventures is the go-to spot for exploring the Cheat River with kayaking, canoeing, whitewater rafting, tubing, and stand up paddleboarding experiences for the entire family.

EAT Piccolo Paula's Caffe offers delicious sandwiches, salads, pizzas, and soups.

canaanvalley.org

Thomas

Home of the renowned music venue the Purple Fiddle, this hip town overlooks the Blackwater River and has one of the most vibrant art communities in the state.

DO Park along Front Street and walk the length. You'll find charming antique stores, art galleries, and cafés.

STAY Blackwater Falls State Park—only five minutes away—has rooms at the lodge as well as cabins and camping options.

PLAY Don't leave without visiting one of West Virginia's most beloved natural wonders, Blackwater Falls.

EAT Looking for a hearty breakfast? Try Flying Pigs.

DRINK TipTop is an awesome place to go for good coffee, pastries, and light fare. Visit the home base of Mountain State Brewing Company, the largest full-scale microbrewery and distributor in the state.

canaanvalley.org

Davis

The last stretch of Corridor H will connect Davis with Parsons. With Canaan Valley Resort, Timberline Four Seasons Resort, and Blackwater Falls State Park a stone's throw away, options for adventure or relaxation abound.

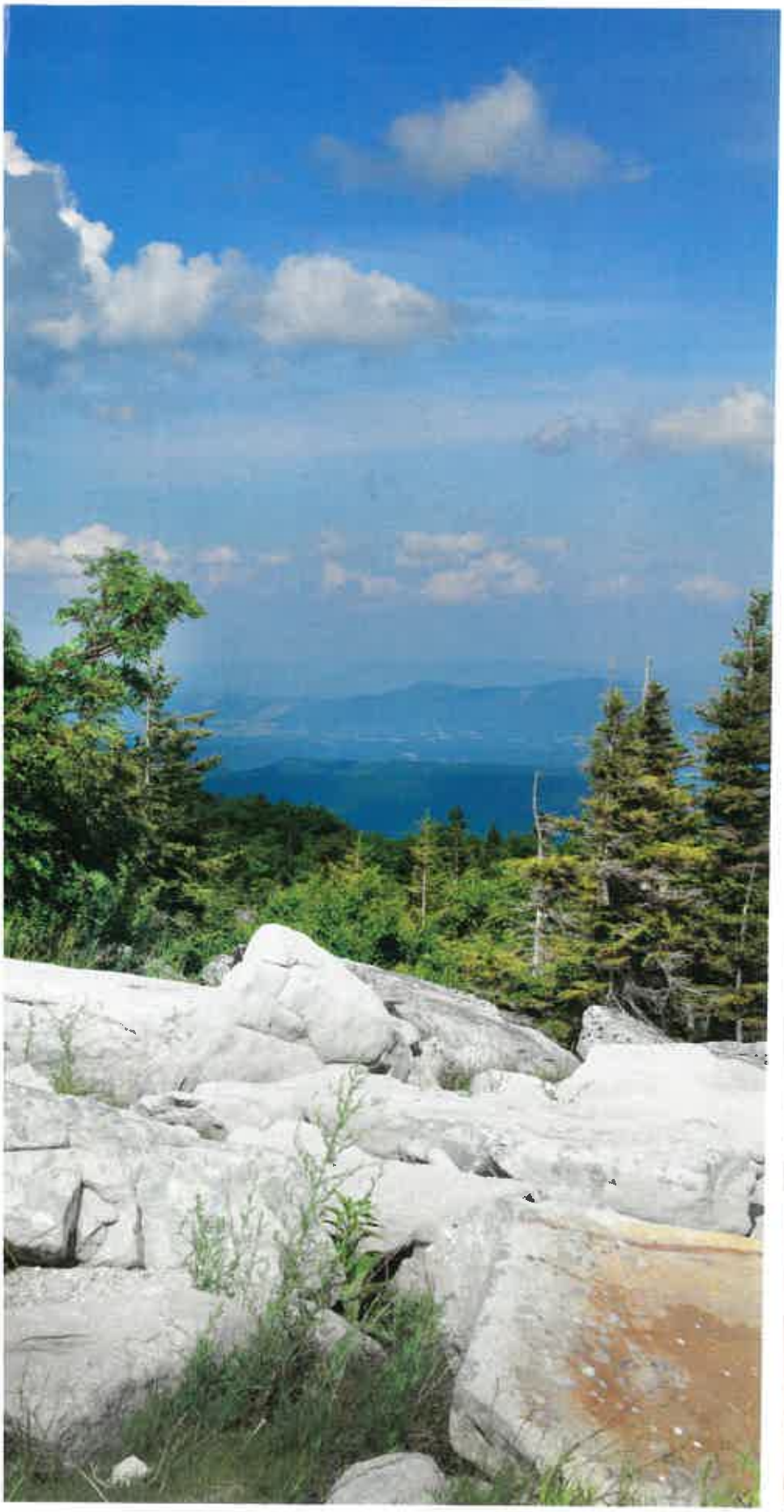
DO Check out Canaan Valley Resort & Conference Center, where there are activities for every season. Hike the Dolly Sods Wilderness and Bear Rocks Preserve or mountain bike at Moon Rocks.

SHOP WV Highlands Artisans Gallery sells a variety of locally made products.

EAT Sirloin's Cafe and Helibender Burritos are dining institutions, but Wicked Wilderness Pub and Parlor is a new spot drawing big crowds. For gourmet burgers try Barrels Brewhouse, and visit the Purple Fiddle not just for entertainment but also its sandwiches, wraps, and soups.

DRINK Quickly becoming the epicenter of West Virginia's craft beer scene, Blackwater Brewing Company and Stumptown Ales are always popular destinations.

canaanvalley.org



Bismarck

Located right outside Bismarck, along the Allegheny Front, the 1,200-acre Mount Storm Lake is a cooling reservoir for Dominion Energy's Mount Storm Power Station. The power station takes in approximately 234,000 gallons of water from the lake per minute, cycling the water in the entire lake every two and a half days. This keeps the water warm, making it a popular destination for swimming, boating, fishing, scuba diving, and sailing.

The area is one of the windiest spots east of the Mississippi, which makes it a prime location for wind farms. Wind turbines stretch along 12 miles of the Allegheny Front and generate enough electricity to power 66,000 homes.

Moorefield

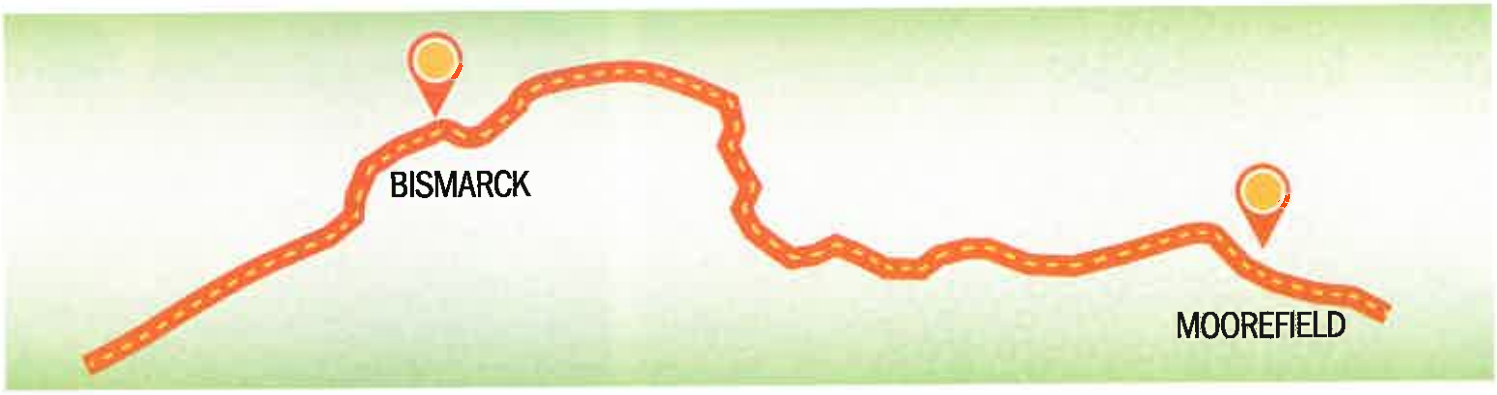
The stretch of the corridor between Mount Storm and Moorefield is jaw-droppingly beautiful. Moorefield is located at the confluence of the South Branch Potomac River and the South Fork of the South Branch of the Potomac River and is the county seat of Hardy County.

PLAY Play a round of golf at Valley View Golf Course. Visit West-Whitehill Winery for a tour and tasting.

EAT O'Neill's Grill dishes out some tasty burgers, and Mullin's 1847 Restaurant is a charming restaurant and bar.

STAY Stay at South Branch Inn and you'll receive a free bowling pass to nearby South Branch Potomac Lanes and a free movie ticket to the local movie theater.

visithardywv.com



Baker

Just a quick jaunt off the corridor are several hidden treasures worth exploring.

PLAY Lost River State Park offers several recreational amenities like biking, hiking, horseback riding, geocaching, tennis, and swimming.

DO Check out the 17-acre Rock Cliff Lake and Trout Pond, the only natural lake in the state and home to native brook trout.

STAY After resting your head at Guesthouse Lost River or the Inn at Lost River, you might never want to leave.

EAT The Guesthouse Lost River has become a destination dining spot and the Lost River General Store is a charming place to grab a quick lunch.

visithardywv.com

Wardensville

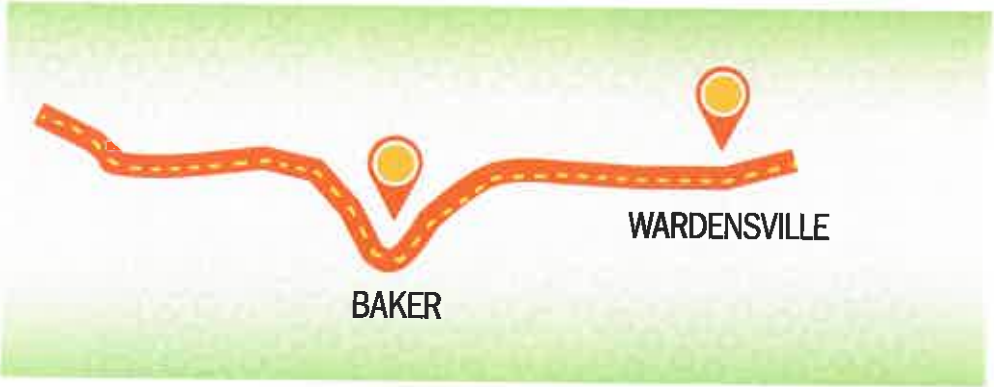
This darling town is at either the beginning of Corridor H or the end, depending on which direction you're traveling. Either way, it is definitely worth a stop.

SHOP You can't miss Lost River Trading Post and its Grasshopper Gallery—just look for their signature red cow. This modern mountain general store offers American-made products, local handcrafted items, antiques, food, and craft beverages. Also make sure you check out Star Mercantile & More and Cacapon River Arts.

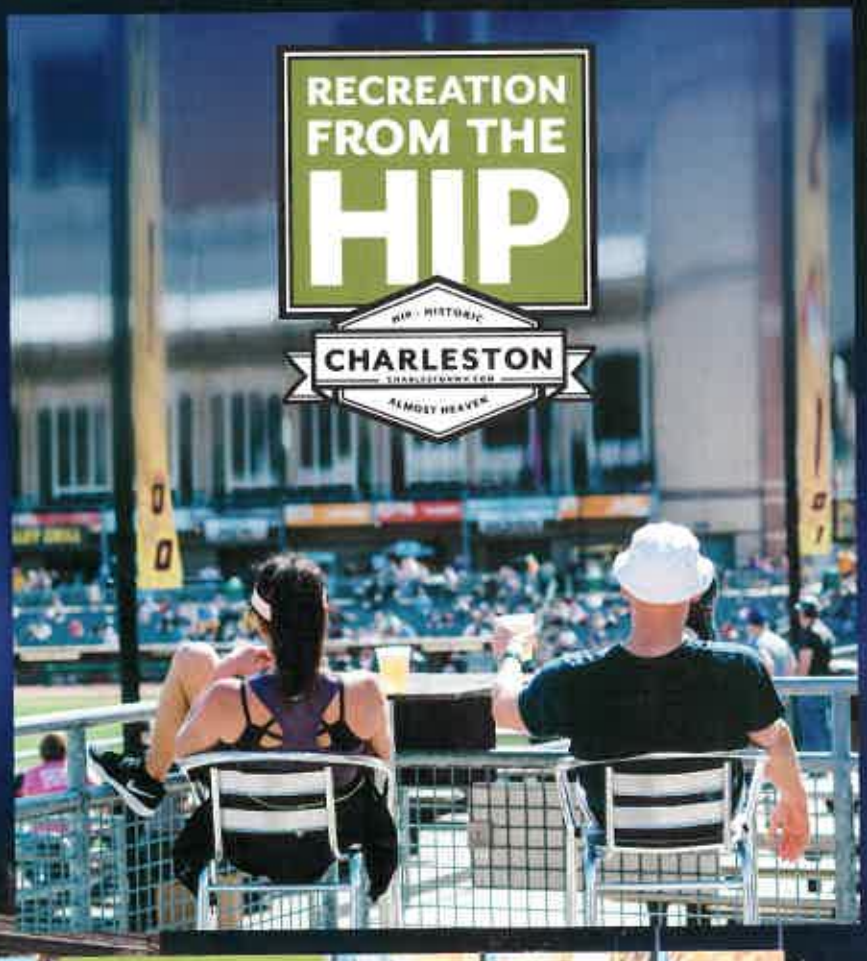
EAT Visit Wardensville Garden Market for coffee and a freshly baked pastry, or grab a sandwich or two. For light fare visit Lost River Trading Post, or for good down-home cooking try Kac-Ka-Pon Restaurant.

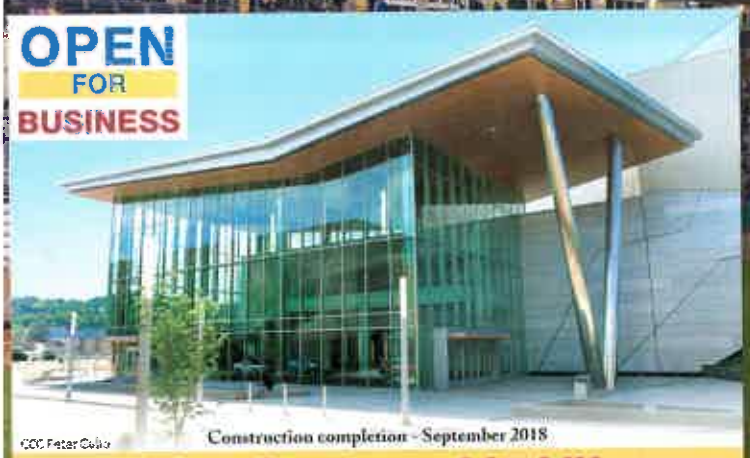
STAY Check out the Firefly Inn. This contemporary four-room motel has recently been transformed and is located within walking distance of a plethora of charming shops and restaurants.

visithardywv.com



Take in Live on the Levee, lazily float down the Coal River or take in a WV Power baseball game. In the summertime, Recreation From the Hip comes in many forms in Hip, Historic...Almost Heaven Charleston.





©CCC Peter Cullen

Construction completion - September 2018

The Center of It All!

Charleston Civic Center embarks on a $100 million-dollar renovation project and will be open for business during expansion! Glass lobbies mark the arena, convention center, and ballroom. An elegant 8,000-square-foot prefunction reception area, overlooking the Elk River, will be adjacent to a 25,000-square-foot beautifully appointed ballroom with banquet seating capacity of 1,500. Eight expansive convention meeting rooms will be added and integrated with existing meeting space. The overall footprint will be increased by 146,000-square-feet. An adjacent 13,500 seat coliseum has a new state-of-the-art LED lighting and sound system.

Charleston Civic Center

200 Civic Center Drive · Charleston, West Virginia @CCCWVA

Access www.charlestonwvciviccenter.com for more details.

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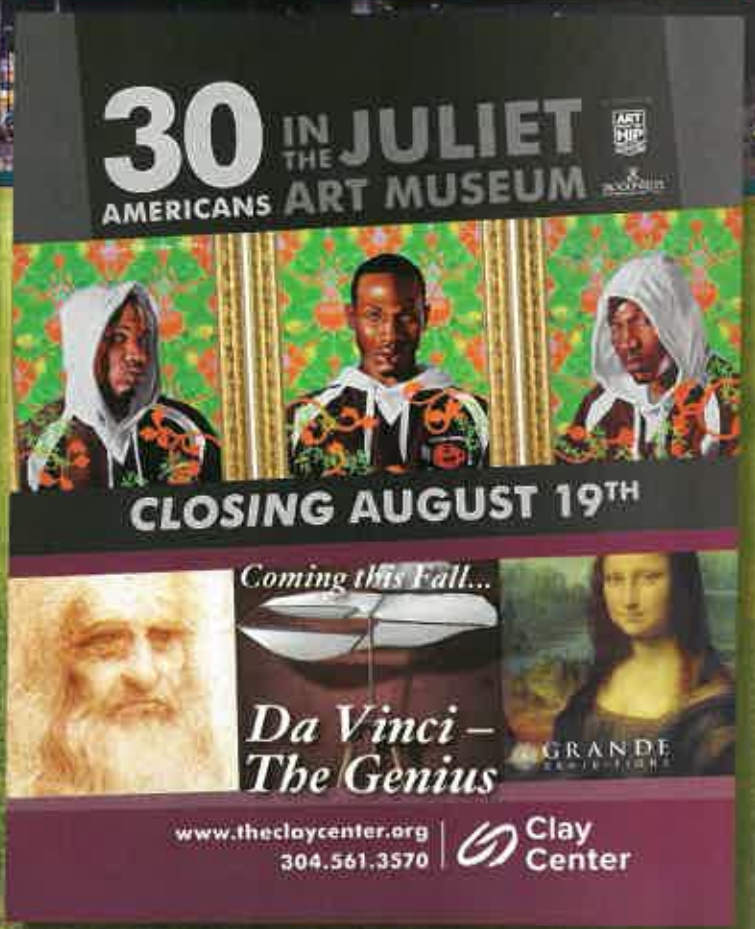
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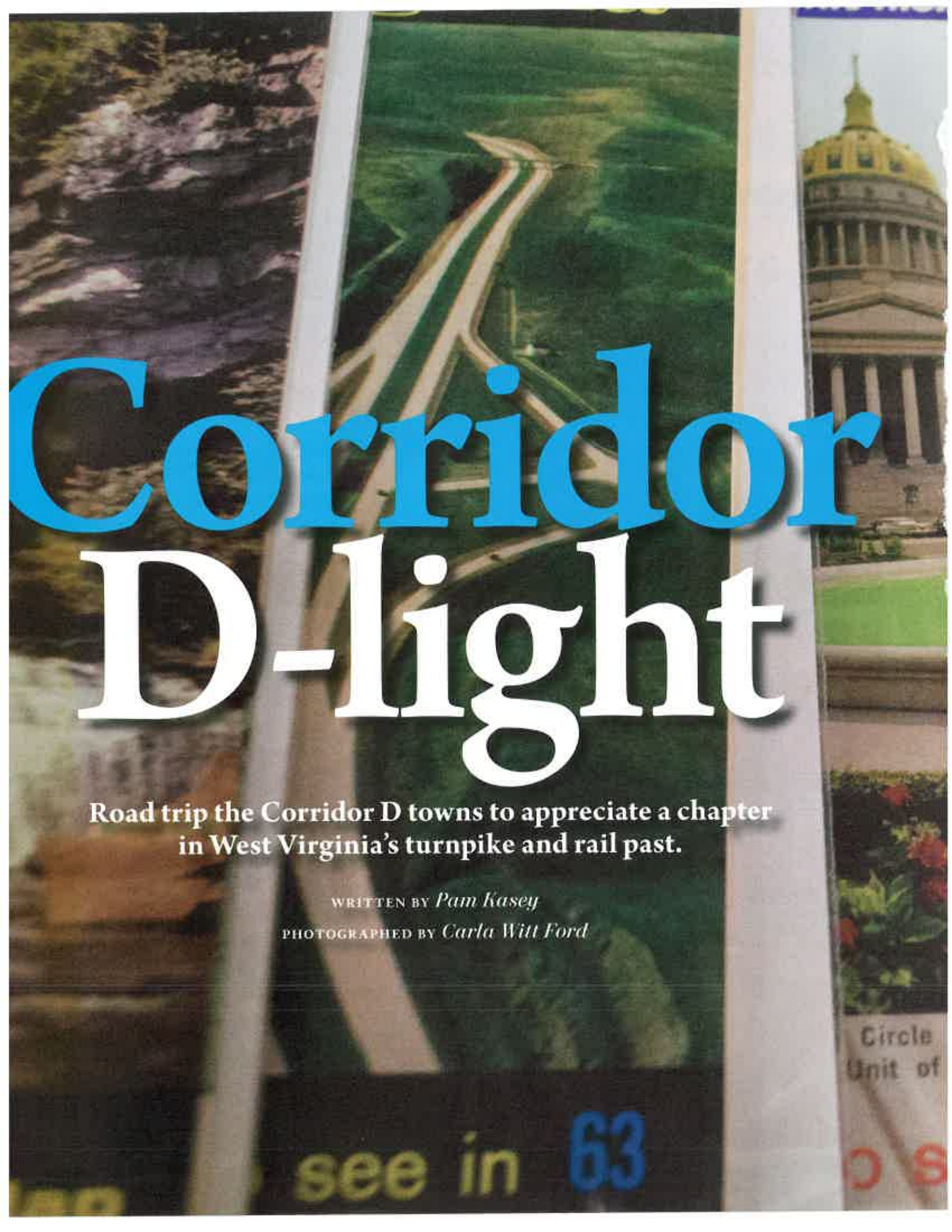

Corridor D-light

Road trip the Corridor D towns to appreciate a chapter in West Virginia's turnpike and rail past.

WRITTEN BY *Pam Kasey*

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Carla Witt Ford*

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One thing the Appalachian Corridor system has given us is ready-made road trips. When a corridor follows an old transportation and trade route, it makes for an especially interesting tour.

That's true of Corridor D between Clarksburg and Parkersburg, built on the path of an early turnpike and alongside a Baltimore & Ohio rail route.

The Northwestern Turnpike opened up trade in the mid-Ohio Valley in the 1830s. By connecting the Eastern crossroads of Winchester, Virginia, with Parkersburg, Virginia, on the Ohio River, it sped the movement of people from the seaboard west and agricultural products east. Then, in the 1850s, a rail line was built from Grafton to Parkersburg that later became part of the B&O's mainline to Cincinnati and St. Louis. Along with coal, oil, and gas, these transport corridors through Parkersburg advanced the development of the rolling landscape of this part of the Appalachian Plateau.

Tolls and rails are no longer. Around 1970, Corridor D, an easy-travel divided highway, shortened the 75 miles between Clarksburg and Parkersburg to just an hour and a quarter. And after the railroad shut down in 1985, West Virginia State Parks developed the right-of-way as the parallel 72-mile North Bend Rail Trail.

The distance can be a quick drive but, to appreciate the meaning of this old corridor, spend a little time in the old station towns and county seats that sprung up along the way. A great weekend getaway starts Friday night in Clarksburg or Parkersburg and spends Saturday night in lodging midway.

Traveling east to west

It's easy to spend time in Clarksburg. Family-owned Italian bakeries and restaurants are found all over town. A 2,000-seat outdoor amphitheater hosts live music and free movie nights throughout the warm seasons. Vintage Theatre Company produces improv, Shakespeare, and other performances, and downtown's 1913 theater re-opens in 2018 as the fully refurbished **Robinson Grand Performing Arts Center**.

Heading west out of town on U.S. 50, or Corridor D, you soon pass the tiny village of Wolf Summit. This is the eastern trailhead of the **North Bend Rail Trail**. The rail-trail crosses 36 bridges and goes through 10 tunnels—Mark Twain is said to have called the branch of the B&O it's built on "the longest subway in the world." Fans of covered bridges will enjoy the **Fletcher Covered Bridge**, one of just 17 left standing in the state: Take the Marshville Road exit at about mile 70 and drive a mile and a half north. And for a thrill, at about mile 68, take the Flinderation Road exit. Cross Salem Fork and follow the road a short distance to the right to parking at the rail-trail. Walk east on the trail and you'll see **Flinderation Tunnel**, also known as Brandy Gap Tunnel. Some say the voices of the dead buried in the cemetery above can be heard inside the tunnel, and others say they've seen the lights of a train that once overtook a railroad worker.

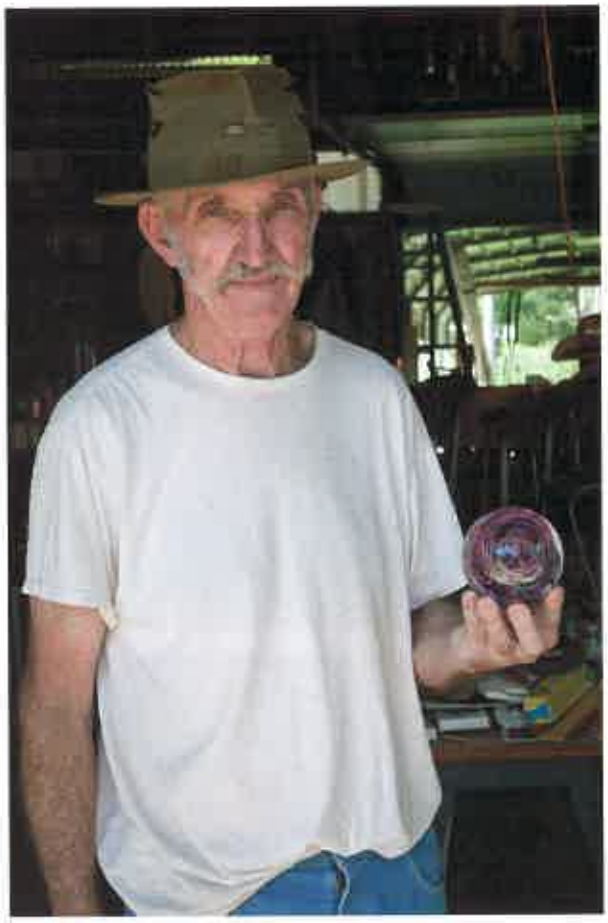
Back on the highway, take the exit at either mile 67 or 65 for Salem. The town of Salem developed around an early 20th-century oil boom. Among many historic downtown buildings are the 1901 Queen Anne–style **Pearcy-Randolph House** (*157 West Main Street*), once home to U.S. Senator Jennings Randolph, and the 1913 **Romanesque Revival Salem Baptist Church** (*153 East Main Street*). A later building, the 1941 **U.S. Post Office** (*121 West Main Street*), houses a 1942 **New Deal mural** celebrating the town's industrial history. **Depot Park** hosts an **Apple Butter Festival** every October (*304.782.1518*).

Salem is also home to **Salem University**, established in 1888 and affiliated in the 1990s with Teikyo University in Japan. If you have time to devote in Salem, check for an event at **Fort New Salem**, a living history museum of more than 15 relocated frontier log structures (*81 Settlers Lane, 304.695.2220, fortnewsalemfoundation.org*).

Stop in any day of the week in Salem for one of **Bella Pizza**'s huge calzones or for a hot or cold sub, pasta specialty, or pizza (*128 West Main Street, Salem, 304.782.2591, @bellapizza5 on Facebook*). Or for a meal between Salem and West Union, try local favorite **Fairview Diner** off the Snowbird Road exit (*49 Fairview Street, West Union, 304.873.1438, "The Fairview" on Facebook*).

After lunch, head to the West Union exit, at about mile 53. Check out the imposing red brick 1899 **Doddridge County Courthouse** (*118 East Court Street*) and the **Veterans' Memorial and Honor Wall** in front. Stretch your legs on the rail-trail right along Railroad Street in town. For primitives and West Virginia-themed decor, stop in and say hello to the sisters who run **Our Mother's House** (*250 West Main Street, 304.666.1600, @ourmothershousellc*

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT *A basket weaving demonstration at Fort New Salem. Bring a flashlight when visiting Flinderation Tunnel. Blackberry cobbler, a customer favorite, at the Fairview Diner. Stop at the Pennsboro Depot, located at the eastern trailhead of the North Bend Rail Trail. The Pearcy-Randolph House stands majestically on Main Street in Salem. At Bella Pizza, order the calzone—you won't regret it. Depot Park hosts the Salem Apple Butter Festival each October. The Fletcher Covered Bridge makes a great backdrop for photos. When it's time for the Apple Butter Festival, grab two jars of this wonderful spread.*



on Facebook). And if you're ready to stop for the night, check out **Main Street Estate** (*203 West Main Street, 304.709.6527, @mainstreetestate on Facebook*), a bed and breakfast in a Victorian home built in the year West Virginia became a state.

Route 50 doesn't follow the Northwestern Turnpike exactly. The village of Toll Gate is one example. Take the exit at about mile 45. Not far from the highway stands a historical marker commemorating one of the gates that operated at every 20 miles along the route. Continue on this stretch of Old Route 50 just a few miles farther west to get from Toll Gate to Pennsboro. A great stop here for history buffs is the **Old Stone House** museum run by the Ritchie County Historical Society (*310 Myles Avenue, 866.363.8416, ritchiehistoricalsociety.com—call for hours*). The house served as an inn on stagecoach routes to Parkersburg and to Marietta, Ohio, even before the turnpike was built. Be sure to drive by the depot, too (*Collins Avenue and Broadway Street*). After the railroad shut down, residents worked to save the depot from demolition; it now serves as a railroad museum and a trailhead for the North Bend Rail Trail. For a snack or a meal in Pennsboro, check out the extensive diner menu and huge portions at **Crossroads Cafe** (*305 Masonic Avenue, 304.659.2777, "Crossroads Cafe" on Facebook*).

Continue west along Old Route 50 to Ellenboro, the home of **Sammy Hogue** art glass marbles (*"The Marble Man" on Facebook*). Hogue welcomes visitors when he's not attending craft festivals.

From Ellenboro, cross U.S. 50 and head south to Harrisville, the seat of Ritchie County. For a little curio shopping, stop along the way at the **Route 16 Flea Market** (*1289 Ellenboro Road, 304.869.4171, @rt16fleamarket on Facebook*) or in town at **Arlo's Antique Flea Market and Flower Barn** (*401 South Spring Street, 304.643.4247, "Arlo's Antique Flea Market" on Facebook*). Take a leap back in time at the famed **Berdine's Five & Dime**. Billed as the oldest five-and-dime in the country, it's chock full of old-timey items like sassafras root and tin and wooden toys (*106 North Court Street, 304.643.2217, "Berdine's" on Facebook*). Pottery fans will love **Pine Hill Pottery**, less than 10 miles south of Harrisville on Smithville Road (*7257 Smithville Road, 304.643.2583,*

CLOCKWISE FROM PREVIOUS PAGE *Ellenboro's Sammy Hogue creates marbles of every size and color. Cliff's Museum of Car Memorabilia, located in The Building on Main Street in Harrisville, contains loads of vintage West Virginia-related car, bike, and motorcycle items. A trip to Berdine's Five & Dime, where there is something for everyone. Arlo's Antique Flea Market and Flower Barn caters to both the picker and the antique shopper with its wide variety of items.*

ANTIQUES

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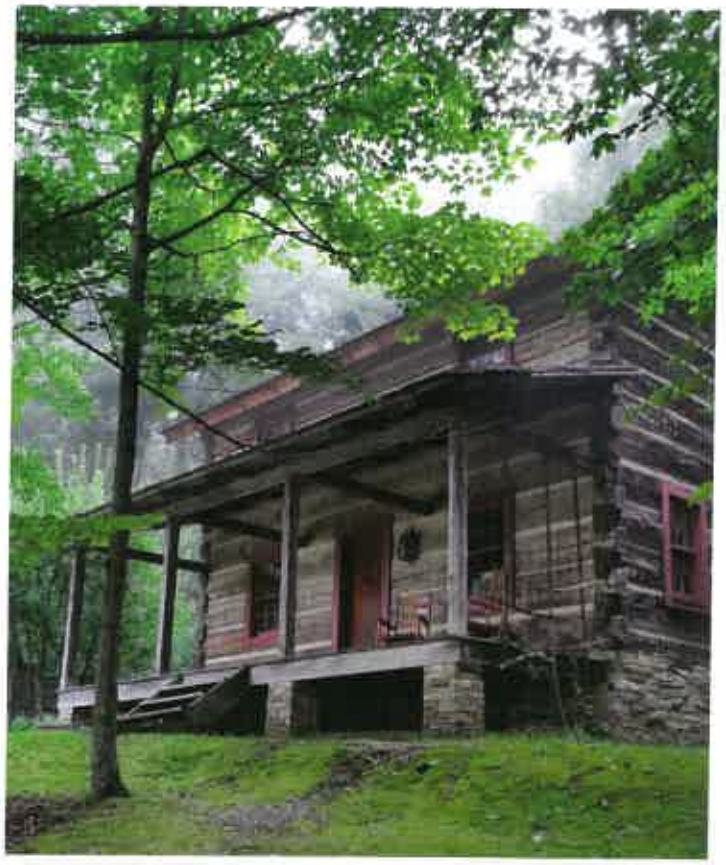

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT *R.C. Marshall Hardware holds an antique store, a barber shop, and a workshop that renovates Italian scooters. The North Bend Rails-to-Trails Foundation Headquarters, located in the old Bank of Cairo building. Mountwood ATV trailhead in Mountwood Park. The Log House Homestead B&B, the perfect spot to rest and relax. Mountwood Park's visitors' center museum has information about the local oil history. North Bend State Park offers a wide variety of activities throughout the year for all ages. The U.S. Submarine World War II Memorial is located in Mountwood Park.*

@pinehillpottery on Facebook—call first for availability). But possibly the biggest and most unique attraction in Harrisville is **Cliff's Museum of Car Memorabilia** (*305 East Main Street, 304.643.4227, "Cliff's Museum" on Facebook*), a 13,000-square-foot lifelong passion project "open by chance or by appointment" that must be seen to be believed.

Follow Main Street, County Route 5, west out of Harrisville to head toward North Bend State Park, a great place for hiking, biking, and horseback riding as well as fishing, swimming, and other water activities. It's another good place for an overnight, too, in its campground, cabins, or lodge. Or for a more historic lodging option nearby with great food, reserve ahead of time at **Log House Homestead B&B** (*647 Homestead Cove Lane, 304.628.3249, loghousehomestead.com*).

Just a few miles away is the old railroad town of Cairo, named after Cairo, Egypt, by its settlers for the presence of water and fertile land. You'll find the **North Bend Rails-to-Trails Foundation Headquarters** located in the old Bank of Cairo building. Check out **R.C. Marshall Hardware**, now operating eclectically as part antique store, part old-time barber shop, with Italian scooters on the side (*273 Main Street, 304.628.3264, @rcmarshallhardware on Facebook*). Grab a snack across the street at **Pastry & Petals** (*298 Main Street, 304.628.3583, @pastryandpetals on Facebook*), then follow 31 north to rejoin U.S. 50.

Take the Volcano Road exit at about mile 22 to see the **U.S. Submarine World War II Memorial**. A few miles farther off the highway is **Mountwood Park**, a Wood County park with 50 miles of trails, an ATV park, disc golf, archery, and many other activities (*1014 Volcano Road, 304.679.3611, mountwoodpark.org*). The visitors' center tells about the **Stiles Mansion** and the oil boom history of the area, and a historical marker commemorates the Endless Cable System that pumped as many as 40 wells from a central power station in the short-lived boomtown of Volcano.

From here it's a short distance to Parkersburg. To continue the road trip's theme, visit the **Oil and Gas Museum** (*119 3rd Street, 304.485.5446, oilandgasmuseum.com*). And end your time appropriately at **Fort Boreman Historical Park**, constructed at the site of a Civil War fort that was built by the Union to protect the B&O and river port facilities.

Mountain State Art & Craft Fair

AN APPALACHIAN EXPERIENCE

July 4-7, 2018

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It's a summertime homecoming!

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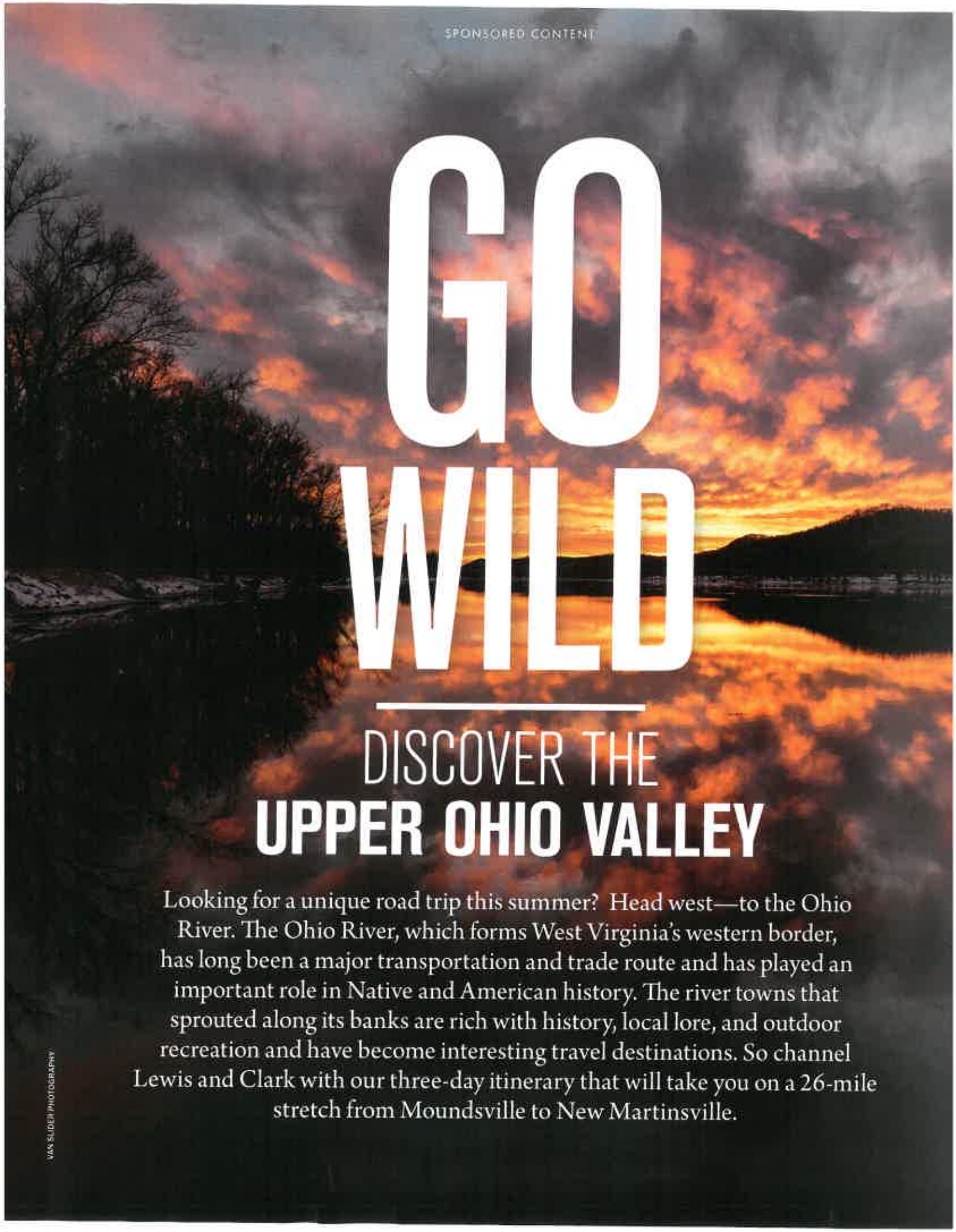


GO WILD

DISCOVER THE UPPER OHIO VALLEY

Looking for a unique road trip this summer? Head west—to the Ohio River. The Ohio River, which forms West Virginia's western border, has long been a major transportation and trade route and has played an important role in Native and American history. The river towns that sprouted along its banks are rich with history, local lore, and outdoor recreation and have become interesting travel destinations. So channel Lewis and Clark with our three-day itinerary that will take you on a 26-mile stretch from Moundsville to New Martinsville.

VAN SLIDER PHOTOGRAPHY

Channel Lewis and Clark and follow the river from **Moundsville to New Martinsville.**

Our three-day itinerary will guide you to new discoveries in the upper Ohio Valley.

Day 1

9 a.m. Start your trip with a visit to the **Grave Creek Mound Archaeological Complex**, a 2,000-year-old burial mound built by the Adena people. It is believed to be the largest of its kind in the United States. The museum is home to the West Virginia Archaeological Research Facility and also serves as the area's visitor's center.

10 a.m. Right across the street is the **West Virginia State Penitentiary,** a gargantuan sandstone Gothic structure on more than a dozen acres. Built in the 1860s, it once imprisoned 2,000 of West Virginia's most dangerous inmates. This sandstone fortification was a site of prison riots and executions. Now tourists can wander the abandoned prison halls, rumored to be among the most haunted in the country, with guides who once guarded its gates.

Noon After your tour of the penitentiary, you'll be ready to grab some grub. The locals go to **Bob's Lunch** at 800 Third Street for home-cooked diner food. Or if you are in the mood for a margarita and great Tex-Mex food, then **Acapulco Mexican Restaurant** at 800 Lafayette Avenue is the place for you.

1 p.m. After lunch, take a tour of town. You can visit the colorful **Fostoria Museum**, which is dedicated to Moundsville's industrial hand-blown glass past. Just a block away is the 300-seat **Strand Theatre**, built in 1920. The old brick vaudeville theater was recently restored and is home to stage productions, musical events, and movies. Another interesting spot to visit is the **Archive of the Afterlife: The National Museum of the Paranormal**, located in the Sanford Center on Third Street. The museum's collection of oddities and paranormal objects was featured on Destination America's *Ghost Asylum*.

2 p.m. Satisfy your sweet tooth and grab a cookie, pastry, cupcake, or donut at **Quality Bake Shoppe** on Second Street.

2:30 p.m. It's time for a little side trip! Hop in the car and take U.S. Route 250 to **Prabhupada's Palace of Gold** in New Vrindaban. This is America's Taj Mahal and is unlike anything else in the state or maybe even the country. Sitting 20 minutes northwest of Moundsville, the Palace of Gold is perched like a fairytale Indian kingdom in the middle of Appalachia, surrounded by rose gardens, serene pools, and fountains, and overlooked by bigger-than-life statues. The palace was constructed in the 1970s as a home for the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, or the Hare Krishna. What began as a simple temple abode built by untrained laborers became an ornate palace for kings. It is something you have to see to believe. Tickets cost $9.50 for adults and $5.50 for children.

5 p.m. After touring the Palace of Gold, immerse yourself in the culture by eating at **Govinda's**, a vegetarian restaurant located on the grounds, that specializes in Indian dishes. All of the restaurant's items are made with fresh produce and are free of meat, fish, eggs, onions, and garlic, and many of the dishes are dairy-free. On weekends the restaurant offers an all-you-can-eat buffet.

6 p.m. Spend the night at the charming **Bonnie Dwaine Bed and Breakfast** in nearby Glen Dale, a beautiful B&B that offers five guest rooms, each with a private adjoining bathroom, in a resplendent restored Victorian that almost serves as a local museum itself. Or check out the lodging options at **Grand Vue Park**. You can stay in grown-up tree houses—the treetop cabins—or choose a more traditional cabin.

Day 2

9 a.m. Start your day at **Grand Vue Park**. There's so much to do here, you could easily fill multiple days (*see next page*). Take the three-hour guided canopy tour that consists of eight dual ziplines ranging in distance from 310 to 2,100 feet through the trees, which includes three suspension bridges and the Zip Line Ride—2,100 feet of dual zipline with a great view of downtown Moundsville.

Noon Time to head south on a short 35-minute jaunt toward New Martinsville. Overlooking the Ohio River, this charming and easily walkable town boasts some great architecture. Once you leave Grand Vue Park, make your way south to WV Route 2, skirting the Ohio River. Stop at **Prima Marina** on Water Street on your way out of Moundsville. The restaurant overlooks the river and dishes out some serious burgers, fresh salads, and unique sandwiches.

1:30 p.m. Halfway between Moundsville and New Martinsville, turn left on WV Route 89 at Proctor and eight miles to **Thistledew Farms**, known for its quality wildflower honey products. You can purchase their products, which include raw, unfiltered, creamed, comb, and flavored honey, as well as mustards, vinegars, beeswax candles, ornaments, and skin and lip balm, as well as the complete line of folk toys from the Mountain Craft Shop Co. in their gift shop. You can also take an educational tour and learn from the experts on the importance of beekeeping. Make sure you take home some honey and a WhimmyDiddle or FlipperDinger.

3:30 p.m. After you pull into New Martinsville, stop at the **Wetzel County Museum**. Inside you'll find information on the area and the Native Americans who lived in the area for thousands of years.

5 p.m. For dinner, consider **Amy's Candlelight**, formerly Blue's Sidecar, located on Route 2. Or check out **Barista's Café & Pub**. This cool, casual eatery is easy to find on Main Street—just look for the purple porch. Barista's café serves fresh, original sandwiches and burgers and is open until 8 p.m., Tuesday through Friday. On Friday and Saturday from 5 to 10 p.m. the café serves pizza. If you are looking for a nightcap, you are in the right spot. At night Barista's small, stone basement bar fills up quickly with regulars and musicians, and in the summer, the large deck and outdoor space is a great place to relax.

Day 3

9 a.m. If you aren't staying at a local B&B, then head to Main Street. No visit is complete without eating at **Quinet's Court Restaurant**. Quinet's Court has been serving locals down-home comfort food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner for nearly a century. You'll start your day with a hearty breakfast—order off the menu, or choose the breakfast buffet that is available on Saturday and Sunday. If you don't experience Quinet's Court for breakfast, then visit for lunch.

10 a.m. If you feel like you need to work off breakfast, New Martinsville has parks galore. With a splash park and a challenging water walk, the newly renovated **Lewis Wetzel Pool** offers fun and relaxation for people of all ages. You can also rent a paddleboat and take a tour around the pond at **Lewis Wetzel Park**. The city also maintains **Hydro Park**, the marina area on Hydro Drive, where boaters have easy access to the Ohio River and bicyclists can jump on a great trail along the river. Hydro Park also has a ball park, primitive camping areas, and fishing piers.

Noon Grab a bite to eat at one of the local restaurants—**Dos Hermanos Mexican Restaurant** (on the water), and **Choo-Choo's Restaurant** are all good options.

1 p.m. After lunch, take Route 2 six miles south to **Marble King** in Paden City, a delightful spot that will bring out the kid in everyone. Founded in 1949, Marble King, is one of the last remaining marble factories in North America and produces more than a million marbles a day.

2 p.m. After perusing Marble King's gift shop, take U.S. Route 20 33 miles to Jacksonburg, where **Lantz Farm and Nature Preserve** offers 555 acres of walking trails that lead to diverse flora and fauna as well as a catch-and-release pond for fishing. The preserve was created in 2006 as the result of a gift from Lantz family descendants who wished to enhance wildlife diversity and public recreation. Wheeling Jesuit University now owns the property, and it is managed in cooperation with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. Three trails, color-marked and of varying degrees of difficulty, originate near the Lantz family homestead.

Palace of Gold

COINED "AMERICA'S TAJ MAHAL," this sight to behold has kept its majestic post amid the Appalachian Mountains since devotees of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (pronounced prab-boo-pah-duh), founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), began building the palace for their teacher in 1968. Prabhupada, who was born in 1896 in Calcutta, India, came to America in 1965 at nearly 70 years old and began his missionary work in New York City. When one of his disciples acquired a piece of land near Moundsville, Prabhupada began traveling to West Virginia, but all that sat on the 133 acres of land was an old, run-down farmhouse. So his followers decided to build him a home in the Appalachian countryside, and Prabhupada established New Vrindaban, the first ISKCON community. The original plan was simple, consisting of a cinder block foundation. But as members built, they kept coming up with ideas to expand and make the building more elaborate. When Prabhupada died in 1977, the palace still had not been completed, and he never had the fortune of living in the extravagant home. In honor of their teacher, the members decided to make the Palace of Gold a monument to him.

Today, tours of Prabhupada's Palace of Gold are given to tens of thousands of visitors each year, from curious tourists to those who make pilgrimages from all around the world to honor the author, teacher, and saint who spread Krishna consciousness across the globe. The grounds consist of the palace, a pond featuring a magnificent fountain and lotus flowers that are at peak bloom in early July, a lake with an ornate boathouse housing a large swan boat and 30-foot-tall statues of deities, and a temple with intricately carved teakwood throughout, where New Vrindaban community members can worship. In the summer, usually around the second week of June, the award-winning rose gardens burst with nature's glory as more than 1,000 bushes featuring nearly 100 varieties of roses flourish and bloom.

Despite a history clouded with controversy after a federal investigation in the 1980s put investigators on the trail of the then-leader of the New Vrindaban community, the Palace of Gold remains a majestic monument to Prabhupada and his community of followers, leading quiet lives of devotion in West Virginia's hill country.

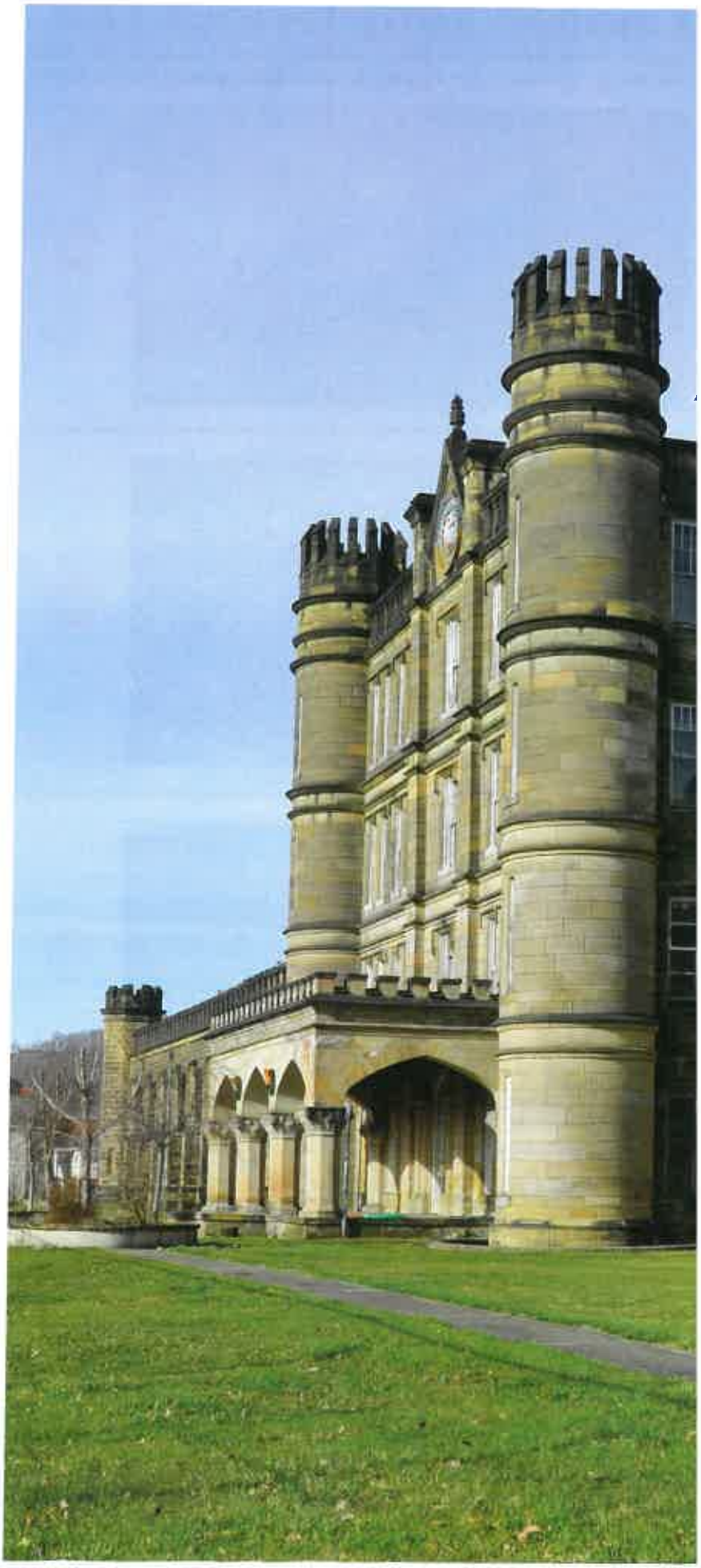
REBECCA KIGER FOTOGRAFIA

CAPTIVATING HISTORY

The castellated Gothic West Virginia Penitentiary may appear foreboding and cheerless—just stepping onto the grounds elicits an eerie sense of unease—but if you take a tour, you'll be talking about it for years to come. It's no wonder. The West Virginia Penitentiary is considered by many paranormal groups and travel guides to be one of the most haunted prisons in America. Once the most violent prison in the nation, crowded to the brim with maximum-security criminals, the building has seen more enmity and brutality than most. Maybe you believe this past has imbibed its walls with hostile energy and lingering spirits, or maybe you're just interested in the voluminous history underpinning its sinister reputation. Either way, a trip to the West Virginia Penitentiary is guaranteed to be a memorable experience.

The stories alone are enough to induce chills in even the most stoic visitors. For the better part of 50 years, conditions within the cold stone walls of the penitentiary bred one of the bloodiest penal environments in the country. There were nearly 40 homicides, each one haunting in its own gruesome way. One inmate was attacked by three prisoners who had fashioned dull shivs out of slivers of the cell bars. Another inmate was burned alive in his cell. One man was stabbed to death in the single hour of freedom he got from the confines of his cell each day. Before capital punishment was abolished in 1965, nearly 100 men were executed—nine in an electric chair that inmates made called Old Sparky. In all, the death toll stretched to nearly 1,000 people.

After the penitentary operated for more than 100 years, the West Virginia Supreme Court ruled in 1986 that the conditions there constituted cruel and unusual punishment and ordered the prison to be decommissioned. The former prison was leased in 1998 by the Moundsville Economic Development Council and has become a tourist facility. Visitors can come take a historic day tour or take a paranormal tour and stay overnight. The penitentiary is especially well known for its haunted house. The Dungeon of Horrors occurs throughout the month of October and was rated No. 5 in the country in 2017 by Scare Factor. The former prison also has an escape room game called Escape the Pen, where you are given clues to try to get out before your time is up. The site hosts various events throughout the year in the Moundsville Center, which also acts as a training center for corrections facilities throughout the state.



Choose Your Grand Vue Adventure

Marshall County's Grand Vue Park is a unique, adventure-laden asset. Boasting a zipline canopy tour, 15 miles of recreation trails, an aquatic center, a par 3 golf course, miniature golf, a playground, ice skating, and more, it's a place you can easily spend a week.

DISC IS FUN

Grand Vue Park has two disc golf courses. The Yellow Course is geared toward families and beginning players. The course is mostly flat and can be played in as little as 30 minutes. The Black Course is one of the best-ranked courses in the country and is the best course in West Virginia. The Black Course was designed by the 1986 World Champion Johnny Sias in 2009 and is geared toward advanced players. This course is over 9,400' and a par 71. It covers hilly terrain and has stunning views of the park. Disc rentals are available at the gift shop or main office for $2.

PEDAL POWER

Grand Vue Park's recently renovated mountain biking trails cover 21 miles of hilly terrain throughout the park with scenic stops along the way. The trail is marked with an orange diamond blaze system with a reflective border to aid night rides. The course is technical in some areas and is geared toward intermediate and advanced riders. There is a hiking and biking friendly 4-mile double track for novice and beginner riders. You can rent TREK Marlin 6 and X-Caliber 7 bikes in a variety of sizes. Hourly rental: $25 per hour per person up to 4 hours. Day rental: $60 per person 8-hour time slot. All rentals will include helmet and a keepsake Grand Vue Park water bottle.

IN THE AIR

Grand Vue's Aerial Adventure Park offers adrenaline-pumping action in a safe, controlled environment. Guests can climb the rock wall and the ropes course, bounce down the rappel wall, take a ride on the zipline and giant swing, and learn to fly on the trampoline and Mega Jump. Children 15 and younger must be accompanied by an adult.

SLEEP ADVENTURE

Who says sleeping can't be an adventure? At Grand Vue Park you can sleep in the treetops in one of their four luxury Treetop Villas. There are two one-bedroom and two two-bedroom villas, with queen size beds and 43-inch televisions in each bedroom. The main room of each cabin is equipped with a queen sleeper sofa and a 51-inch television. The kitchens contain microwaves, stoves, dishwashers, Keurig coffee makers (bring your own K-cups), and refrigerators. Each cabin has a wood-burning stove with an electric starter, and all wood is provided. Each cabin also comes equipped with a hot tub on the covered deck for year-round use. These cabins are rented on a nightly basis all year round.

FESTIVALS

Mark your calendar for these events

JUNE

June 8 Fostoria Glass Society 38th Annual Convention held at the Moundsville Center in the Former West Virginia Penitentiary. *fostoriaglass.org*

June 24 New Vrindaban Open House celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the Palace of Gold and the community's existence here in Marshall County. *newvrindaban.com*

June 29–July 1 Back Home Appalachian Arts & Music Festival is Wetzel County's premier summer festival. It is held during the first weekend in July. This free festival is a must-attend. The 2018 lineup features such acts as the Del McCoury Band, David Grisman, The Travelin' McCourys, Billy Strings, The SteelDrivers, and more. *backhomefestival.com*

JULY

July 23–29 Marshall County Fair at the Fairgrounds in Moundsville. *marshallcountyfair.net*

AUGUST

August 13–18 Town and Country Days fair in mid-August is held at the 4-H Campground in New Martinsville. Includes livestock and farming events, quilting demonstrations, carnival rides amd games, flower, vegetable, and canning contests, crafting, and lots of food treats. Live bands perform in the evenings. A Mud Bog and Demolition Derby are popular with locals and visitors alike. *jpaden.com/tcd*

August 25 The Appalachian Artisan Festival at the Cockayne Farmstead in Glen Dale. Free fun while you learn about traditional trades and crafts of Appalachia from local artisans. Shop their wares and explore the 1850's farmhouse and check out the many children's activities. 10 a.m.–4 p.m. *cockaynefarmstead.com*

SEPTEMBER

September 1–3 Paden City Labor Day Celebration begins on Saturday with games, rides, entertainment, and food treats all along Main Street down to the city park. A parade follows Monday's all-you-can-eat breakfast at the Main Street Fire Station. *visitmoundsville.com*

September 15 The UMAC Fall Festival and Elizabethtown Festival, the biggest one-day event in Moundsville. The Fall Festival takes place on Jefferson Avenue and features local vendors, the various shops on Jefferson, food vendors, and live music. Check out demonstrations by artisans making apple butter, churning butter, baking bread, weaving, woodcarving, creating bagpipes, doing decorative painting, and enjoy music from the strolling barbershop quartet. Elizabethtown Festival is hosted by the Former West Virginia Penitentiary at the Moundsville Center.

September 22–October 31 Explore the Dungeon of Horrors at the penitentiary. The haunted house is filled with characters and displays that are sure to thrill and scare. The North Walk is also available during these times, where visitors can explore the areas of the prison where the most paranormal activity occurs. *wvpentours.com*

September 28–30 New Martinsville Area Regattafest is the last weekend in September. Regattafest features fast family fun with entertainment, kids' activities, and APBA-sanctioned powerboat racing and speed record runs.

September 29 Grand Vue Park's Fall Festival is its largest one-day event of the year. With local vendors, food, live music, and more, there is something for everyone.

Unique Places to Stay

BONNIE DWAINE BED AND BREAKFAST is a restored Victorian B&B in Glen Dale that offers five guest rooms, each with a private adjoining bathroom. *bonnie-dwaine.com*

Looking for a spiritual experience? Then stay at the Palace of Gold in a cabin on the grounds or in a room at **THE PALACE LODGE.** *palacelodge.com*

GRAND VUE PARK has unique luxury Treetop Villas and deluxe and traditional cabins. Make your reservations early because they fill up quickly. *grandvuepark.com*

CNH TINY HOUSE VILLAGE in Moundsville has seven separate homes that can be rented short term or long term. *cnhtinyhousevillage.com*

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WVtourism.com/Wetzel

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VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 5

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Morgantown

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The summer farmers' market is in full swing now. It's one of the best things about summer in Morgantown and, if you think about it, it's a big community show of faith in each other. To be motivated to make the Saturday morning trek downtown, we market-goers have to believe there's going to be a lush spread on offer. Growers have to believe even more that we townies are going to make that trek. They start seeds months in advance, till the soil, maybe even take care of animals year-round. Our belief in each other is paying off—this year's market has more leafy, aromatic, flavorful variety than ever. Contributor and Preston County native Aldona Bird's photo feature (page 50) introduces us to some of the farmers who plant in the certainty that we're going to show up, come summer. We're so lucky they do.

You'll find much of what's great about summer Morgantown in this issue: Lengthening rail-trail connections and a river access upgrade. Big festivals. Best outdoor dining. But even a great town needs to be gotten out of sometimes, and you can get inspired here by quick getaways, camping itineraries, and road trips across the state and beyond.

A road trip necessity we think doesn't get enough attention is the places we stop to fuel our cars and bodies. Zack Harold's story on West Virginia–based gas station convenience store chains (page 56) grew out of our surprise on learning that BFS is headquartered right here in Morgantown. Several chains are West Virginia–bred—something to be aware of next time you pull off the interstate.

Our feature story on downtown parking (page 45) isn't as much summer-themed as it is a response to rumblings we've heard. I spent some of the past month immersed in parking policies. It's a surprising topic—every person I bounced it off of ended up saying "this is so interesting." We learned that the Morgantown Parking Authority works hard to make sure parking serves downtown merchants and their customers. We also found that some merchants have reasonable ideas about ways it might serve them better.

Travel where any of us will this summer, downtown is our shared ground, the place where we host city and county administration, cheer the dozen annual parades on, and show visitors our best side. Aspects like parking—and greenspace and homeless services and public art and large truck traffic and outdoor seating—are the kind of community issue we tackle in these pages. If you like the local journalism you read and see here, thank an advertiser and give a gift subscription to a friend. If you think we got it wrong, let us know on social media. Or email me directly.

Stay cool,

PAM KASEY,
Editor

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FESTIVAL MEMORIES

Summer festivals can range from homespun to surreal and all of the good things between. Here are a few favorite New South Media staff moments.

"I'm a big festival hopper, but Pioneer Days in Marlinton has a special place in my heart. I had the honor of presiding over the festival as Miss Pocahontas in 1988. Best memories include calling bingo at the senior center, leading the pet parade, and attending the mud bog and ATV races at the park—yes, I got muddy! The 52nd annual Pioneer Days Festival runs July 12–15." — **Heather**

"While chatting up the late, great Melvin Goins at Summersville's Music in the Mountains bluegrass festival one year, I casually mentioned that I played mandolin. He told me he was looking for a mandolin player and invited me to try out with his band, but I was shy about my abilities and politely passed. I often wonder how different my life might've turned out if I'd been bold enough to give it a shot. The 30th annual festival is June 20–23." — **Zack**

"I went to the All Good Music Festival all of the years that it was at Marvin's Mountaintop in Preston County. One year, my friends and I heard from many folks of a UFO sighting at the Shakedown Street vendors' area while Primus was headlining on Saturday night. Naturally everyone pulled their phones out to record it, but it was gone within a minute. The videos wouldn't play back for anyone. Long live All Good! "— **Kelley**

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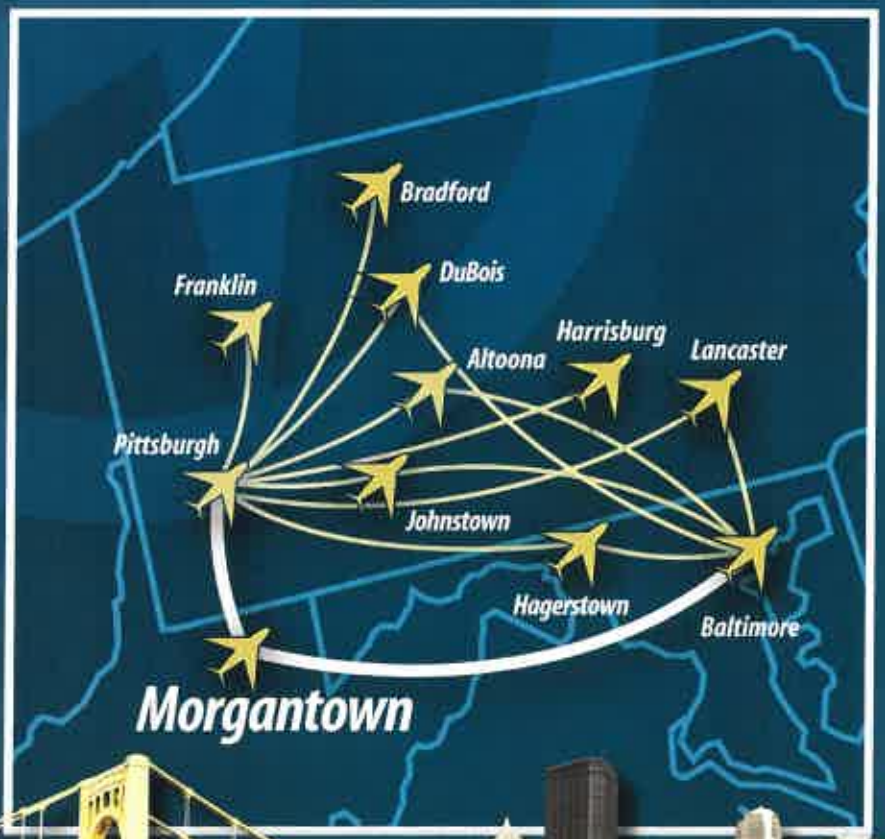

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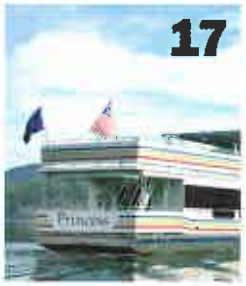

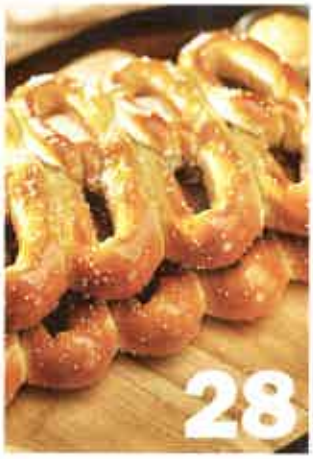

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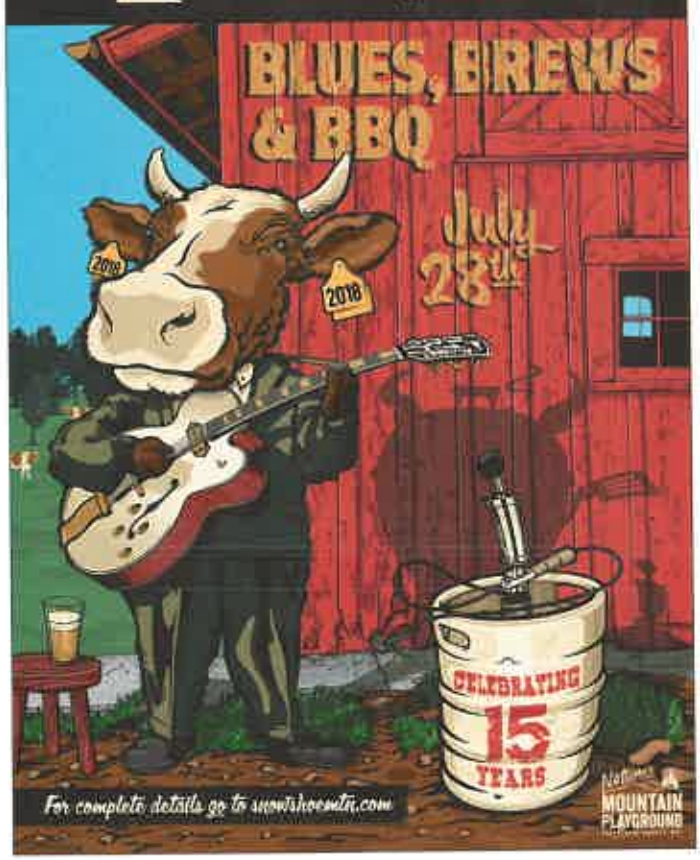

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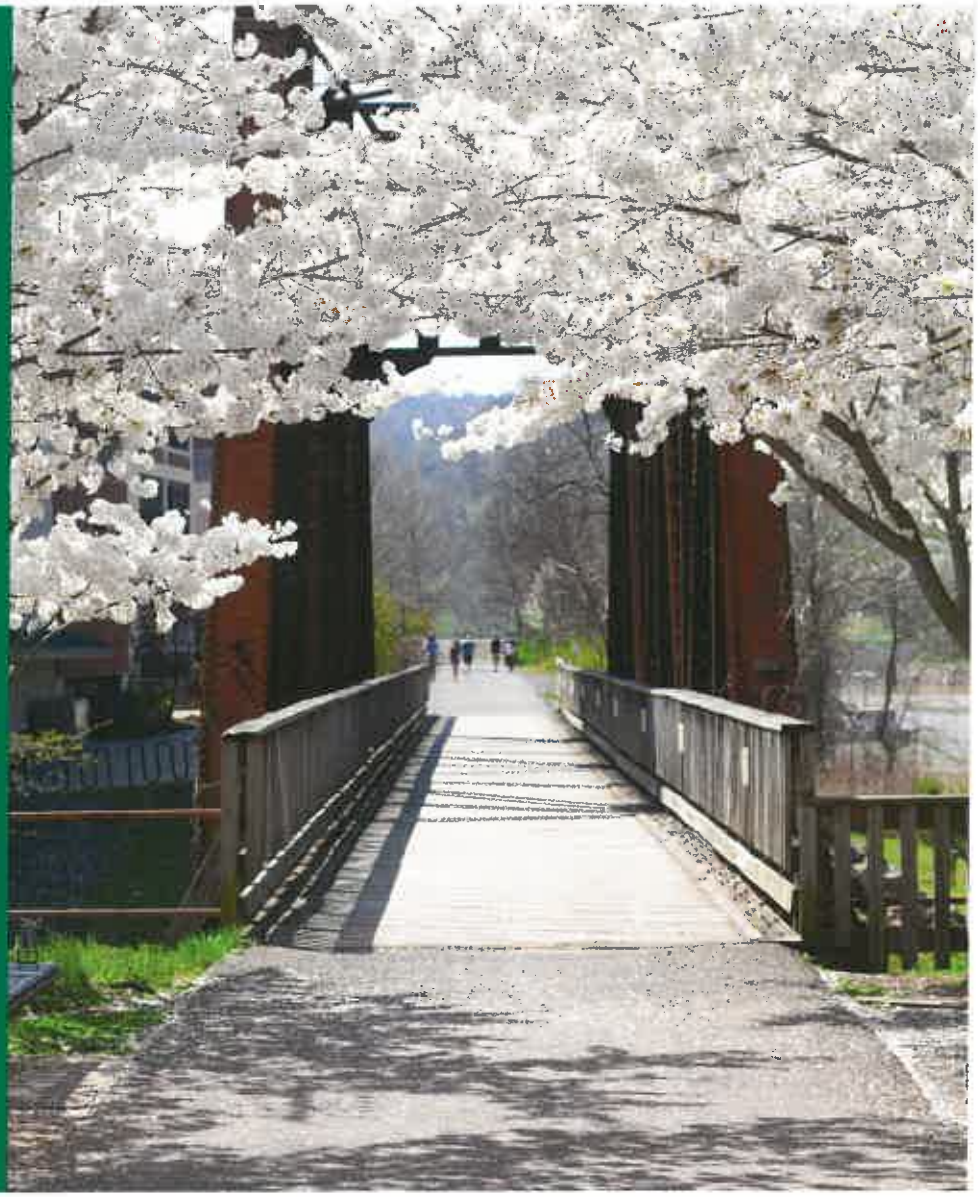
This MATTERS

Going Regional

Morgantown's rail-trails have made life here so much better. Since the 50-mile network's first section opened in 1998, the Deckers Creek Trail, the Caperton Trail along the Mon River, and the Mon River Trail continuing north and south from that have given us paths from A to B that are scenic and relaxing rather than gasoline-fueled and hectic. They've probably added years to many of our lives.

Rail-trails are, of course, based on abandoned parts of the nation's railroad network. So when enough local rail-trails are in place, trail advocates start to think regional.

Morgantown sits at the center of a next level of trail development, the 238-mile Parkersburg-to-Pittsburgh corridor. To our south, nearly 150 miles of trail between here and Parkersburg will be complete if only four gaps totaling 22 miles are filled, a project the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy said in April is underway. And north of town, completion of just two gaps totalling 28 miles will connect Morgantown with the popular Great Allegheny Passage. The GAP connects Pittsburgh with Cumberland, Maryland, with further connection on the 185-mile C&O Canal Towpath to Washington, D.C. **railstotrails.org**



CARLA WITTFORD

NO PAIN, NO PAVEMENT

The city will put our user fee to work this season with 5.8 miles of paving in 19 segments across town, including some major corridors like Richwood Avenue and Willowdale Road. Plan some alternate routes: University Avenue will be paved between Patteson Drive and Campus Drive.

TRAFFIC PEEVE

You know that flashing red signal that went in downtown a few years ago for northbound drivers at the intersection of High Street and Kirk Street? New flash: Flashing red means come to a full stop.

ENJOY THIS

Best of the Fests

Thousands of people can't be wrong.

WHETHER YOU LIKE to kick back all summer long or keep active in the summer heat, there's a local festival just right for you.

Morgantown and the surrounding area host music and craft events through the summer. At these three most popular events, you can listen to music, sip regional wines, buy local art, join fellow biker enthusiasts, or work up a sweat. All three festivals are family-friendly and direct charitable funds back into the community.

written by ALDONA BIRD

MOUNTAINFEST

JULY 26–28 | Mylan Park

Consider spending a long weekend zipping along winding country roads, enjoying West Virginia's beautiful scenery while cruising on your chopper.

Not a biker? MountainFest Motorcycle Rally might still be your jam. More than half of the attendees come just for the music—among this year's talents are Bret Michaels, Montgomery Gentry, and headliner Alabama.

Nonprofit MountainFest invites bikers from all over the county to enjoy scenic rides, concerts, more than 70 vendors, and other activities. From the previous 13 annual festivals, MountainFest has donated almost a million dollars to Mylan Park and its charities. *wvmountainfest.com*

COURTESY OF MOUNTAINFEST

WINE AND JAZZ

SEPTEMBER 15–16
Camp Muffly

Silver might be the traditional 25th anniversary gift, but we'll take wine, jazz, food, and artisans this year at the 25th annual Wine and Jazz Festival.

In the scenic setting of Camp Muffly, you can enjoy a taste of West Virginia. Not only will you savor wine tasting and live jazz music, you can also try samples from local restaurants and shop for artisan creations.

Nonprofit West Virginia Wine and Jazz, Inc. returns proceeds to the community through music and educational scholarships via WVU community outreach as well as through other sponsorships and donations. *wvwineandjazz.com*

COURTESY OF DAVID BESS

WVU MEDICINE MORGANTOWN MARATHON

SEPTEMBER 15–16
Start and finish at the WVU Coliseum

More than 1,000 runners will take to Morgantown city streets this fall, not only from the local area but also from various states and countries and all walks of life. The WVU Medicine Morgantown Marathon not only benefits participants' physical health, but also donates proceeds to Operation Welcome Home—which has put more than 400 veterans into full-time jobs.

The challenging 26.2 miles includes 2000 feet of elevation gain and all seven wards of the city. Those seeking an easier route may prefer the Mountain Mama 8K, open to K–12 runners, or the Morgantown Thirteener. *morgantownmarathon.com*

COURTESY OF WVU MEDICINE MORGANTOWN MARATHON

RELISHTHIS

A Sweet New Sport

You can't spear the ball in pickleball, but you can slice it.

AMERICA'S FASTEST-GROWING sport has taken root in Morgantown.

First played in 1965, pickleball, a hybrid of racket-based games, is popular among Mountain State snowbirds who spend winters south. Its local origins spring from a converted tennis court in Granville. When Justin Stephens' parents introduced him to the game not many years ago after they returned home from wintering in Florida, he found he loved the social interaction. In 2014, he became an ambassador for the USA Pickleball Association and a local promoter of the sport.

A pickleball court is striped like tennis but smaller, like badminton. The game is played with short-handled rackets and a hard, lightweight plastic ball with holes in it. Playing in singles or doubles, participants serve, dink, and volley the ball across the net until one side claims victory by reaching at least 11 points with a two-point lead. Underhand serving and a smaller court make it less physically demanding than tennis—though still a workout.

In Morgantown, Stephens, with the help and enthusiasm of other players, has increased participation in the Morgantown Pickleballers to about 75 regular players from Morgantown, Fairmont, and Clarksburg. They congregate on courts and in a rapidly growing Facebook group, where they plan matches, share photos, and celebrate members' competition victories.

Rick Shaw, a longtime player and enthusiast, remembers when the only place to play was the Granville Pickleball Court. While he's thankful for that space, he's happy there are more facilities in Morgantown now. These include Krepps Park, Mylan Park, Wesley United Methodist Church, and Westview Tennis Center. Shaw helped convert some of the locations, a task he says is as simple as painting new lines and buying the nets, which are lower than tennis or badminton.

Players range from their 20s to their 80s and show up for the exercise, competition, and camaraderie. Some play five times a week, and several local players have medaled at regional and national competitions. In fact, Stephens and his sister Sarah Gnegy won first place in mixed doubles in the U.S. Open Pickleball Championships in Naples, Florida, in April.

Morgantown Pickleballers recently established a website and hope to become an official USA Pickleball Association club. They plan to offer youth workshops and to host tournaments at the new Mylan Park facility's nine indoor courts. Stephens says an added benefit of the new facilities will be a boon to local businesses when tournaments are held there.

Pickleball is also growing across the state. The website of the company Ultra Pickleball lists 15 venues, from Charleston to Wheeling and Parkersburg to Paw Paw, with more opening all the time.

In Morgantown, both Stephens and Shaw are excited about the new facilities and the growth of the sport they love. They say newcomers learn it easily, and anyone who goes and plays a few games is sure to go back.

To give pickleball a try, put on some comfortable clothes and tennis shoes and show up during scheduled play at any of the venues listed on the website—players always welcome newcomers enthusiastically. *morgantownpickleball.com*

written by AUSTIN REMPEL

LOVETHIS

Bring on the Cotons

Some of the best examples of this little dog are bred right in Morgantown's South Park.

MORGANTOWN'S PRIZEWINNING breeder of Cotons de Tulear, Adrianne Dering, has done it again. In February, her dog Mimi won Best of Opposite at the prestigious Westminster Kennel Club dog show in New York—that's best of the opposite gender from the dog that wins Best of Show. Then, in March, Mimi took Best of Breed at Crufts in England, the world's largest dog show, and Mimi's father, Elvis, took Best of Breed at the United Kingdom Toydog Society Championship Show.

The Coton de Tulear is a small dog named for the Madagascar city of Tuléar and the French word for "cotton." Its origins on Madagascar are uncertain, but 17th century French colonists fell in love with the dogs and took them to Europe. Several hundred years later, they're prized for their sociable nature.

Dering bought her first Coton de Tulear in 2006. When she won a ribbon at her first dog show, in 2007, she was hooked. Her breeding program, Hopecrest Cotons, has raised 15 American Kennel Club champions and six European title holders in the Federation Cynologique Internationale. Mimi is the No. 1 coton in the United States.

Today, Dering has four cotons in addition to Mimi and Elvis. Their next show will be the USA Coton de Tulear Club National Specialty show in Lexington, Kentucky, in September. *"Hopecrest Cotons" on Facebook*

written by PAM KASEY

NIKKI BOWMAN; COURTESY OF ADRIANNE DERING

RIDE THIS

Ride The Princess

Tygart Lake Cruises' popular sightseeing tour boat just got bigger.

SIGNS SAY ONE OF THE hottest attractions in the region this summer is the new cruise boat on Tygart Lake outside Grafton, a quick drive south of Morgantown.

The Princess is a 75-foot-long double-decker sightseeing boat. Built in 2001, she gave cruises on Raystown Lake in central Pennsylvania until Dan and Deanna Williams, owners of the marina at Tygart Lake, bought her to replace a smaller tour boat. "The last boat only held like 40—this boat holds 125," enthuses Tygart Lake Cruises manager Brenda Tokarz. The upgrade appears to have been a good idea: Before the 2018 season even opened on Mother's Day, the boat was chartered for more than 50 weddings, graduation parties, family reunions, and other private events. Wheelchair accessible and equipped with facilities for hot food service that can be catered to order or self-catered, it's a unique and convenient party venue.

But if you're just looking for a fun afternoon this summer, The Princess will give two-hour public cruises on Saturdays and Sundays through September 15. The tour includes Tokarz' historical narration covering everything from the four communities that were flooded to create the lake to the problems the government had moving cemeteries to a locomotive accident on an adjacent hill. Watch Facebook for the schedule and call to reserve. *304.672.7701, "Tygart Lake Cruises" on Facebook*

written by PAM KASEY

COURTESY OF TYGART LAKE CRUISES

WHAT'S THIS

History in the Hills

Mason-Dixon Historical Park unites communities across what was once a line of division.

JUST MINUTES west of Morgantown on West Virginia Route 7, Mason-Dixon Historical Park boasts 300 acres of hiking trails and remote sections of Dunkard Creek perfect for a little peaceful fishing or paddling. But this park is more than recreational: It also commemorates the famous labors of English astronomers Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon.

Mason and Dixon were tasked in 1763 with surveying a 240-mile line disputed by the Penns and the Calverts, whose royal charters overlapped. Ultimately, Mason and Dixon were forced to cut their survey short in 1767 when their Native American guides could not cross into enemy territory. The point where they made their final observations, Brown's Hill, is part of Mason-Dixon Historical Park and is listed as a National Historic Landmark.

"I love the historical significance of the Mason-Dixon Line," says Betty Wiley, who has been involved with the park since it was established in the mid-1970s. "I grew up on adjacent property and hiked on the park property as a kid."

Today, the park's amenities include cabins, a camping area, pavilions, a barn, and several ball fields, along with indoor facilities that are available to rent for any occasion. "Here at Mason-Dixon Historical Park, we have the flexibility to hold a variety of events throughout the year," says J.R. Petsko, who has been park superintendent since 2016. "We have something for everyone: wildflower walks, a summer concert series, community ramp and buckwheat dinners, festivals, and more."

This year's Summer Concert Series kicks off on June 9 and features the tunes of Allegheny Reign, a bluegrass group from right here in north central West Virginia. For just $5 a person, and free for kids under 12, community members can take blankets or chairs and enjoy a music-filled evening. Other acts taking the stage this summer include The Hillbilly Gypsies on July 14, Jakobs Ferry Stragglers on August 4, and Holly Spears on August 19.

Also taking place this summer is the Hilly Billy Roubaix bicycle ride, one of Mason-Dixon Historical Park's biggest events of the year. Attendees participate in a 74-mile bike race through the winding

COURTESY OF MASON-DIXON HISTORICAL PARK

COURTESY OF MASON-DIXON HISTORICAL PARK

We have something for everyone: wildflower walks, a summer concert series, community ramp and buckwheat dinners, festivals, and more."

J.R. PETSKO, PARK SUPERINTENDENT

back roads and hills of West Virginia and Pennsylvania. Scheduled for June 23 this year, the event draws a crowd of spectators, who get in for free.

"Five hundred bicycle riders from all over the world come to the park for this each year. Last year, we had riders from 20 different states as well as Canada and Europe," Petsko says. "For cyclists, they call this a bucket list event, and we are ecstatic that they come and enjoy Morgantown for that weekend every year."

The month of August brings another popular and unique event, the Mountain Spirit Pow Wow, which honors Native American culture through a weekend of education and entertainment complete with food, music, dancing, and crafts.

The park has added a new annual event to its calendar. Last fall the inaugural Mason-Dixon Line Festival marked the 250th anniversary of the completion of Mason and Dixon's survey. "We had a grand celebration and it was a great success," says Petsko. Visitors loved the festival so much, he says, park administration decided to make it an annual fall event. This year's Mason-Dixon Line Festival is set for Saturday, October 13. "Again we'll have surveying demonstrations, workshops, quilt shows, food vendors, arts and crafts, a buckwheat breakfast, and much more," says Petsko. "We are so excited."

Throughout the winter months, events in the park's indoor facilities include family movie nights with films shown on a 16-foot screen, salt rising bread workshops in the kitchen, visits from Santa Claus every December, and craft workshops for kids.

Support for the park comes from the Monongalia County Commission. Taxpayers have also given strong support. "Thanks to the voters of Monongalia County approving the parks levy last year, we have made many improvements and will continue to do so over the next few years," Petsko says. "One of my favorite improvements that was made possible because of the levy has been the new playground set we added to the park last spring. It has become a hot spot for families." The levy has also allowed Mason-Dixon Historical Park to upgrade roads, install new trails with bridges, and complete park beautification projects.

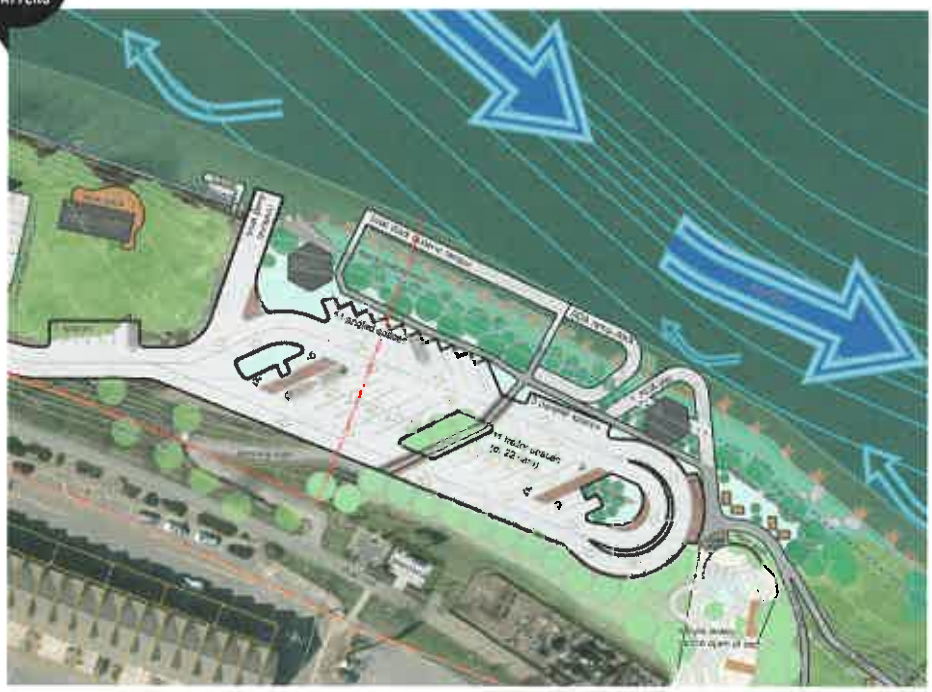
With half of the park lying in Pennsylvania, collaboration between the neighboring counties is also critical. "It is a very interesting dynamic, with two counties each owning half a park," Petsko says. "Luckily for the parkgoers, both Monongalia County and Greene County recognize the historical and recreational positives this park offers to its visitors." Together, the two counties make it a priority to provide a safe and fun place for families to enjoy.

"I think most people would agree that, sadly, our day-to-day lives have become fast-paced, busy, and even stressful at times. The Mason-Dixon Historical Park offers a place where you can visit and just slow down for a few hours," says Petsko. "Take an easy walk along Dunkard Creek, hike in the woods, grill out at one of our pavilions, relax and listen to some great bluegrass music on concert nights at our outdoor amphitheater, or enjoy one of our festivals to relax and forget about your daily hustle."

Mason-Dixon Historical Park is open for public use from 8 a.m. to dark seven days a week. *79 Buckeye Road, Core, masondixonhistoricalpark.com*

written by KAYLYN CHRISTOPHER

THIS MATTERS



KNOWTHIS

A Better Place to Put In

As flatwater paddling grows, volunteers contribute expertise to an upgrade for Star City's riverfront.

MARY WIMMER AND VAIKE HAAS sit across from each other at a Terra Cafe table on day in early May, a laptop open between them. Pictured on the screen is a renovation plan for Edith Barill Riverfront Park, which sits only 500 feet away, just across the Caperton Trail.

"There is not a blade of grass along the riverfront," Wimmer says. "They used to kill the vegetation purposefully, and of course, things started eroding." Tree roots and concrete foundations protrude from the ground. Rocks litter the muddy bank. The dock is small and broken. But the preservation and renewal of natural spaces is a passion for Wimmer, and she's got a long track record to prove it.

While working for 38 years as a biochemistry professor at WVU, she dedicated countless hours to the West Virginia Sierra Club, served as a founding member of the Coopers Rock Foundation, and worked with the West Virginia Environmental Council. "I have a fair amount of energy," she says. "I need energy sinks, places to put it. It gives me pleasure to do something that helps the environment or helps people enjoy being outside."

Wimmer also serves on the board of the Morgantown Riverfront Task Force, which recently received a $4.1 million grant from the Hazel Ruby McQuain Charitable Trust to improve the waterfront at the Wharf District. But that kind of funding was not an option for Star City when she took this project on with the Morgantown North Rotary Club. "Star City is small," she says. "There's not a great deal of money available. Morgantown got a grant to hire consultants to plan the riverfront, but I really didn't want to write a grant. So I thought, I'm going to try to do as much as I can up front, pro bono. We had a whole list of at least 15 people who consulted—fisheries people, engineers, landscape architects, the bicycle board."

Haas took all of this input back to the landscape architecture class she teaches at WVU. Her students came up with five different designs for the park, and the public voted on various aspects of each design. She then synthesized the most popular components into a single, hybrid plan, which she is now showing to Wimmer on her laptop. In less than 48 hours, it will be submitted to Star City Council's May 8 meeting for approval to cost the project out into phases.

"Like Mary, I also have a lot of energy to burn," Haas says. She, too, is involved in a wide variety of community initiatives. One of her previous classes looked at the Edith Barill project briefly, but this time, she made it a long-term focus. This allowed the students to receive feedback and draft revisions, showing them how plans can shift and change in the real world while also providing the promise of seeing their work manifested.

"The first time it was more hypothetical," Haas says. "We got some good ideas, and we liked them. But this round, they dug in."

Members of the Star City Council liked what they saw on May 8, and the next step will be to break the proposal into phases and cost them out.

But there's something more expansive to the work of Wimmer and Haas than a simple park renovation. When the work on Edith Barill is completed, the Monongahela will have a 40-mile stretch—from Point Marion to Fairmont—with 11 proper canoe and kayak access points spaced every 5 to 6 miles. This is a major milestone in the Morgantown's area's long-term ambition to make outdoor and river recreation a key selling point of life here.

"When people look at West Virginia, they think of whitewater," Wimmer says. "My real interest is promoting flatwater boating."

After retiring several years ago, Wimmer spent a fair amount of time kayaking on the Mon with a few friends but suspected that interest was more widespread than it appeared. She cobbled together a list of 82 email addresses from various outdoor enthusiast mailing lists she had access to and asked whether anyone was interested in starting a club. The result was the Morgantown Area Paddlers, or MAP, an all-volunteer paddling club that has taken nearly 100 group excursions since its inception in 2015. MAP has also worked with other organizations to secure grants for the creation and improvement of access points along the Upper Mon Water Trail and created an interactive online map of those points, among other projects.

All of this, Wimmer says, not only makes life in Morgantown more enjoyable, but helps instill the value of the Monongahela in the hearts of residents.

"Getting people outside, getting them to appreciate and enjoy nature, is the only way we're going to eventually get them to help protect it," she says. "Once you learn to love a place, you want to protect it."

written by J. KENDALL PERKINSON

COURTESY OF VAIKE HAAS

READ THIS

Backspin

A Morgantown native returns home and creates an internationally popular electronic music magazine.

JOSEPH WENSELL has never been afraid of taking chances. He grew up in Morgantown but moved to Washington, D.C., after graduating from high school in the late 1980s, without any plan or connections. He spent some time doing dishes in Irish pubs until he got a job at a record store. Wensell would spend the next five years selling music, ending up running the flagship store for Washington-based Kemp Mill Music. But after a few strong-arm robberies, he decided it was time to get out of retail.

He took an advertising sales job at a local business resource publication. It was a tough gig for someone without any advertising experience, but he excelled at the work, which eventually led to a job at *Jazz Times*. Although Wensell started out as an assistant in the advertising section, he was soon selling ads to record labels and music festivals, bringing in significant revenue for the publication.

It was the late 1990s—the perfect time to be in the music journalism game. CDs had overtaken LPs and cassettes, and record labels were scrambling to re-release their back catalogs in this new format. "They had tremendous ad budgets," Wensell says. The magazine swelled with advertising—by the time Wensell left the publication in 2005, *Jazz Times* was putting out 200-page issues 10 times a year. But he left the publication to follow a love interest to Paris, France. "It was a big risk, but throughout my entire life I've taken risks."

Europe has a robust jazz scene and Wensell noticed U.S. labels didn't buy ads in publications there, so he figured he could easily parlay his existing business relationships into some advertising sales. The timing wasn't right, though—the music industry was in turmoil as customers abandoned CDs for music downloads. So, once again, Wensell took a chance. He'd developed an eye for good graphic design during his years in advertising, so he taught himself how to use Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, thinking he might get work with music festivals designing posters, programs, backstage passes, and the like. But customers were most interested in his web design skills, so that's where he shifted his focus.

Wensell had been in France for five years when, taking another chance, he moved to Chicago to help a friend open a jazz club. Wensell was supposed to do all the branding and menus. "Within three months of opening the joint closed." He then tried to start a multimedia company with another friend, but that venture didn't get off the ground, either. "I decided I needed to stop working with friends."

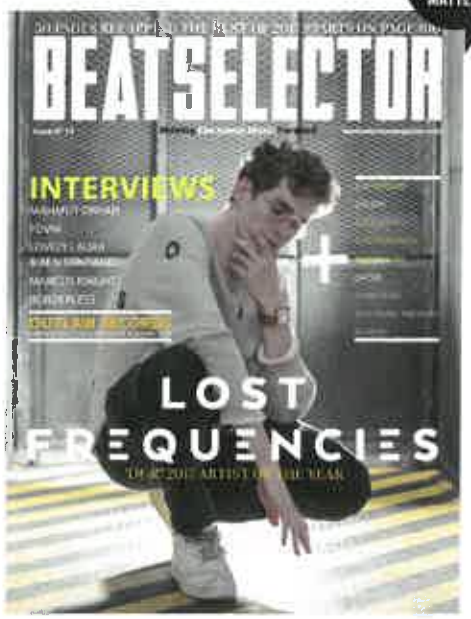
He returned to Morgantown about five years ago after a family member fell ill and, while continuing to do web design and graphic design work, he decided to give magazines another go. His time in Europe had opened his eyes to the EDM scene—that's "electronic dance music," for the uninitiated. Wensell noticed the scene was growing larger and larger in the U.S. "It's a gigantic industry. It's everywhere. You hear EDM in television commercials. The whole video gaming industry is nothing but electronic music producers doing soundtracks," he says.

So in 2015 he launched *Beat Selector*, an online quarterly magazine featuring EDM news, album previews and reviews, and interviews with top DJs, producers, and label runners.

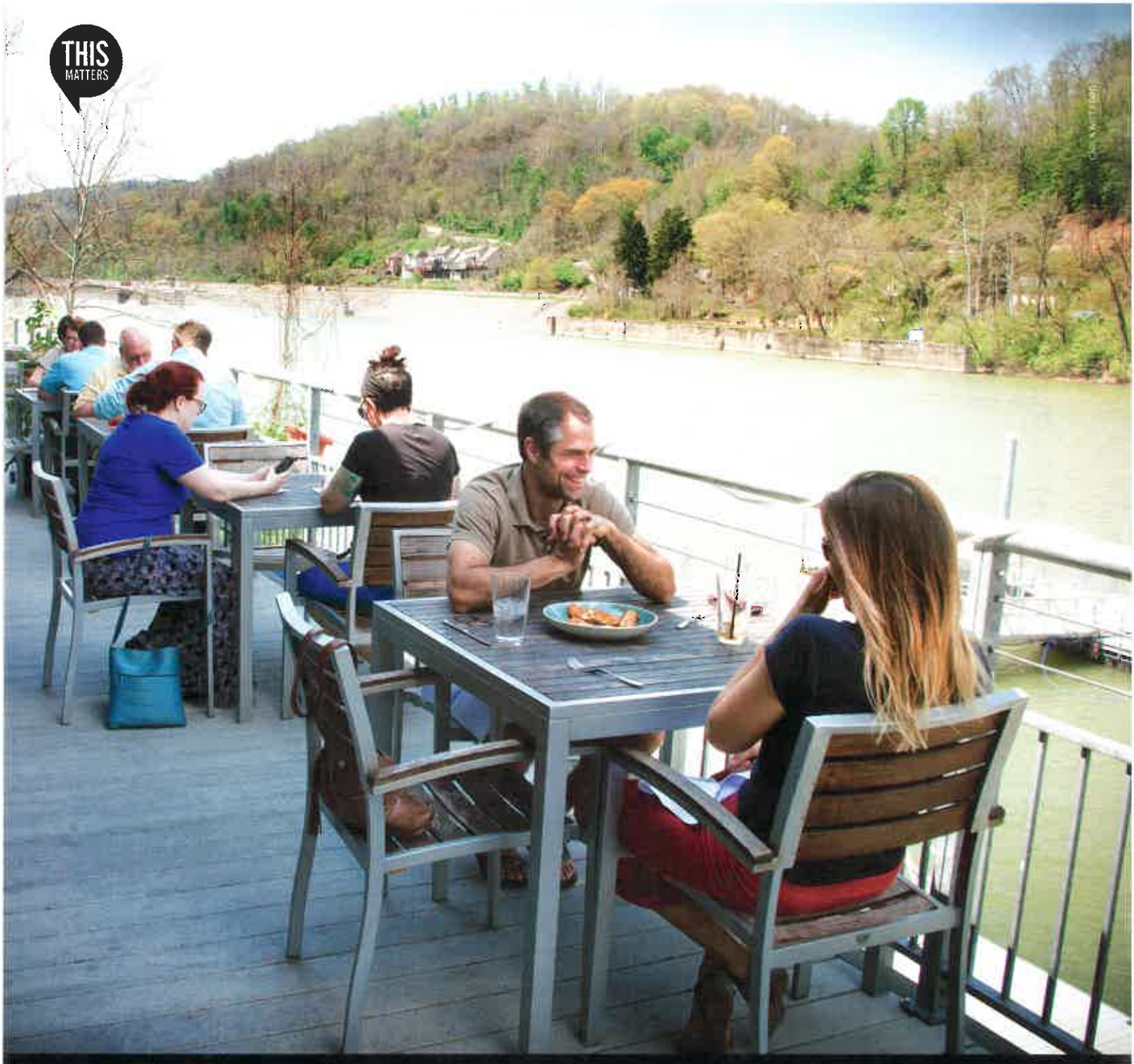
Wensell has produced 13 issues of *Beat Selector* so far, which are available through his website and the digital magazine platform Issuu. While the magazine isn't turning profits yet, Wensell is developing relationships inside the scene and is working with writers all over the East Coast and across the Atlantic. "It's read all over the world," he says. "I just know it's going to get better and better."

And, maybe best of all, he's doing it all from his hometown. "As long as you have a phone and internet connection, that's all you need."

written by ZACK HAROLD



COURTESY OF JOSEPH WENSELL



Eat Out!

LOVE THIS

Dining al fresco is one of summer's great pleasures. These days, Morgantown has more options than ever. Upscale, casual, lakeside, back deck—we could eat outside from April through October and never get bored with the scenery. This summer, take in the good food and fresh air at some of our favorite spots.

written by PAM KASEY

Table 9

The only way to eat closer to the river than this is on your own boat. Enjoy beautifully presented snacks, salads, sandwiches, and entrees for lunch or dinner while basking in the Monongahela's shimmer. We love the Devils on Horseback and the Pan-Seared Hanger Steak. For the earlier part of Saturday and Sunday brunch, the deck is all in shade—the perfect start to a hot summer day. *40 Donley Street, 304.554.2050, dinetable9.com*

The Montmartre

Right downtown but above the fray, the terrace atop the Historic Clarion Hotel Morgantown offers fine dining and panoramic views. The Montmartre's flowering plants and airy cafe seating make for a relaxed meal but, when the sun goes down and the lamps are lit, the rooftop turns magical. Enjoy a filet or a crab cake, and don't skip dessert—you'll want to linger. *127 High Street, 304.291.4222, themontmartrewv.com*

Bourbon Prime

The Marriott's upscale Bourbon Prime restaurant enjoys a deep, shaded veranda overlooking the river and rail-trail. Bourbon Prime's menu, headlined by steaks and chops, features regionally sourced ingredients and opens possibilities for everything from a light bite by the river to a leisurely several-course meal—all complemented by a full bar and the best list of bourbons, whiskeys, and scotches in town. *2 Waterfront Place, 304.284.9850, bourbonprime.com*

Crab Shack Caribba at Cheat Lake

Just across the lake, the outdoor dining at Crab Shack Caribba is a waterfront vacation. Check out the steaks and raw bar, or get into a Hot Mess Special: a cornucopia of steamed snow crab, shrimp, clams, mussels, and andouille sausage, served with cheddar hush puppies and other great sides. Take in the live music on Fridays and Saturdays as boats come and go in the background, and watch the sun set over the hills of Morgantown. *69 Mont Chateau Road, 304.435.3469, crabshackcaribba.com*

CARLA WITT FORD; ELIZABETH FORD; JEREMIAH RAINES; COURTESY OF MORGANTOWN MARRIOTT; PAM KASEY

Tropics Restaurant and Bar

Two covered pavilions on different levels, an open deck with umbrella-shaded tables, and two outdoor bars, one a tiki bar with Hawaiian decorations and grass thatching—everyone can find a favorite outdoor spot at Tropics. Festive string lighting, a koi fish pond, and lush, fragrant tropical plantings that include banana trees complete the island feel. There's often live music and, twice a year, Tropics hosts a traditional luau with a full Polynesian show that includes a fire knife dance. *2500 Cranberry Square, 304.291.5225, tropicswv.com*

Oliverio's Ristorante on the Wharf

Long a town favorite for birthdays, visiting family, prom night—really, any occasion, including a delicious Italian meal any day of the week—Oliverio's only got better when it added outdoor seating. The deep, covered deck is comfortable in all weather. Multigenerational gatherings love its location right beside the Caperton rail-trail, where kids can take a break from decorum and get some exercise, and the deck is just as perfect for a romantic dinner for two. *52 Clay Street, 304.296.2565, oliveriosristorante.com*

MORE

AL FRESCO OPTIONS

Bartini Prime
350 Suncrest Towne Centre Drive, bartiniwv.com

Black Bear Burritos Evansdale
3119 University Avenue, blackbearburritos.com

Crab Shack Caribba
420 Suncrest Towne Centre Drive
crabshackcaribba.com

Chaang Thai
361 High Street, chaangthai.com

Hill & Hollow
709 Beechurst Avenue, hillandhollowwv.com

Lakehouse on the Cheat
620 Mariner Village, lakehousewv.com

Los Mariachis
1137 Van Voorhis Road
losmariachismorgantown.com

Mariachi Loco
100 Hornbeck Road
mariachilocomorgantown.com

Mario's Fishbowl
704 Richwood Avenue
3117 University Avenue, mariosfishbowl.com

Morgantown Brewing Company
1291 University Avenue, morgantownbrewing.com

Morgantown Flour & Feed
156 Clay Street, morgantownflourandfeed.com

Mountain State Brewing Co.
54 Clay Street, mountainstatebrewing.com

Primanti Bros.
402 Suncrest Towne Centre Drive, primantibros.com

Qdoba Mexican Grill
386 Patteson Drive, qdoba.com

Taziki's Mediterranean Cafe
1090 Suncrest Towne Centre Drive, tazikiscafe.com

Terra Cafe
425 Industrial Avenue, terracafewv.com

Town Hill Tavern
998 Willey Street, @townhilltavern on Facebook

Wings Olé
1125 University Avenue, wingsole.com

CARLA WITTFORD (3); ELIZABETH FORD (2); NIKKI BOWMAN

SHOP THIS

Traveling in Style

Fernweh Boutique combines fairs, fashion, and fun.

FERNWEH BOUTIQUE is back on the road for its second season. Part craft vendor, part vintage resale, the mobile shop is a unique presence at any festival or street fair.

Kingwood friends Chelsey Greaser and Moriah and Miranda Peddicord started Fernweh in 2017. They had long dreamt of opening their own boutique and, for these lovers of music festivals, a mobile version was the perfect inspiration. "Being able to take our shop there?" says Moriah Peddicord. "It was like 'Wow! This is really something that we can do.' And it kind of sparked from there."

They bought an old FedEx truck and christened it "Franny." And they chose the name "fernweh," German for "wanderlust," to represent their journey.

The three friends built their shop in the back of the truck with help from friends and family. Franny had received her finishing touches by April 2017 and, the following month, Fernweh Boutique made its debut at the Cheat River Festival with an eclectic inventory that centered on gently used women's clothing, accessories, and textiles. The friends followed up at MountainFest in July, the September Buckwheat Festival, and October's Bridge Day, and also did pop-ups at local events and private parties. Just a few months after its debut, Fernweh was named West Virginia Mobile Boutique of the Year by the website Boutique Hub.

It was a great start and, as far as the Fernweh friends are concerned, 2018 can only be better. "Everybody was so welcoming and receptive and encouraging last year," says Peddicord. "But we are really looking forward to this year, because we don't have that initial expense of the truck—we'll get a better gauge of what we can really do."

Fernweh has an expanded inventory this year, Peddicord says: It'll still have the eclectic women's clothing and accessories, Mexican blankets, and small selection for men, plus graphic tees and flannels. More handmade jewelry this year, too. "Our specialty is a lariat-type choker necklace, and this year our mothers have gotten into some wrap bracelets."

They're also expanding their venues, focusing on more large festivals and ranging as far as Pittsburgh's second-Sunday Neighborhood Flea.

Part of the friends' motivation for all of this is to find fun new uses for things. "We like re-using rather than adding to the dumps," Peddicord says. "The inside of our truck, it's reclaimed wood. And I think we're going to experiment with tie-dying this year. We've started collecting white items that are maye a little dingy or might have a stain. We'll put them to good use rather than throwing them away."

Fernweh has turned out to be a great way for three friends to be creative and live their values. "We're having a blast with it. And it's not always just the three of us," Peddicord says. "Our friends, mothers, fathers—everybody gets a piece of the action."

Hopefully to come later this year: online sales.

The best way to follow Fernweh Boutique is to check in on Facebook and Instagram. *"Fernweh Boutique*

SHOP T-IS

Mood Lifters

Keep it light this summer with local products.

STONE HOUSE LAVENDER PRODUCTS

STONE HOUSE LAVENDER FARM just south of Fairmont will open its springhouse on the weekends this summer as a market for the farm's relaxing, lavender-scented lotions, candles, sachets, and other goods. The farm has relied up until now on essential oils from a farm in southern West Virginia, says owner Mit Abbott, but this year will have its first real harvest from its own 1,000 plants. Possibly to come: lavender u-pick. *68 Nixon School Road, Fairmont, 304.363.6637, stonehouselavender.com, @stonehouselavender on Facebook*

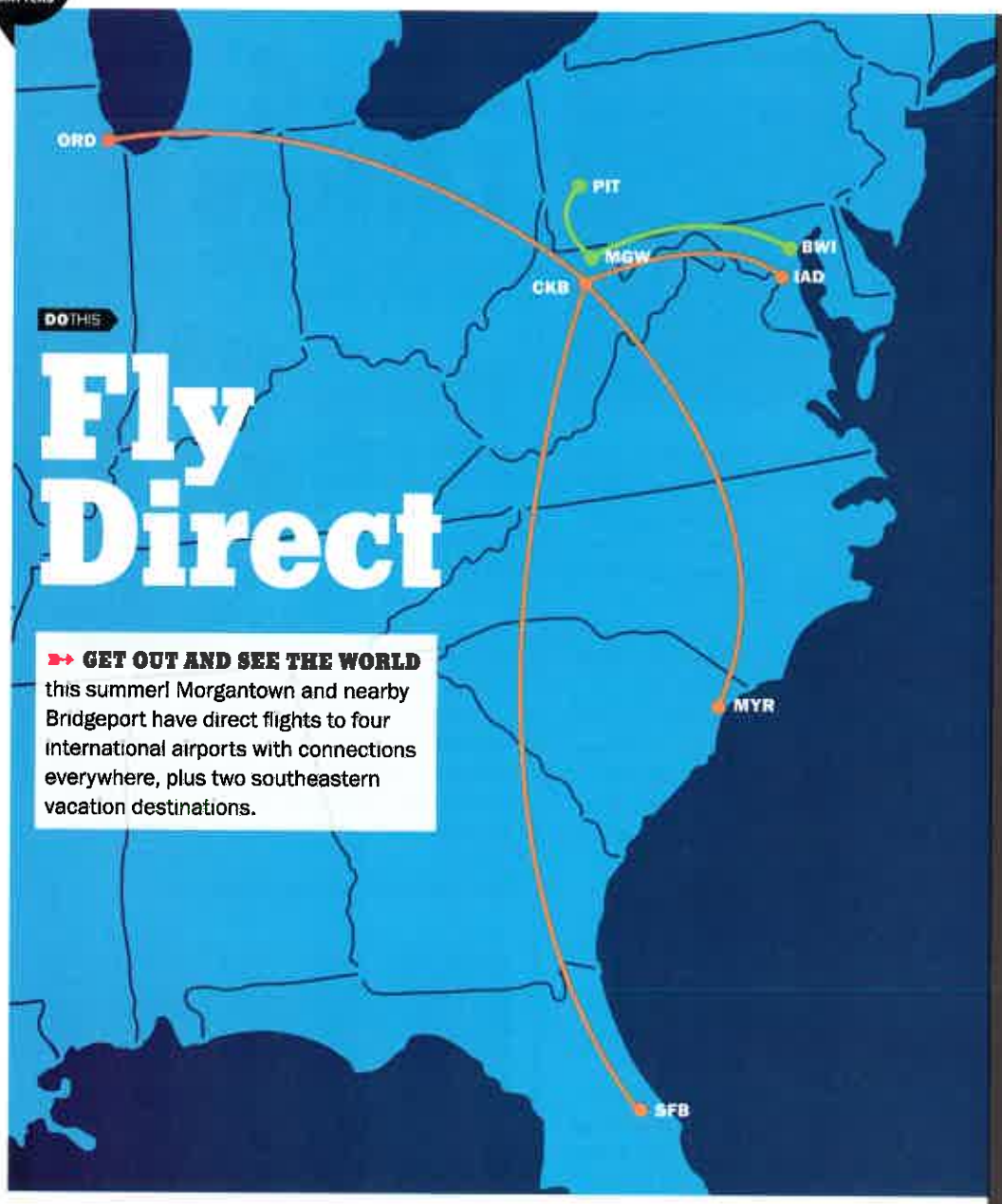
HAPPINESS IS A STATE OF MINE T-SHIRTS

INSPIRED WHEN SHE LEARNED of a news anchor who left the largely downer business of broadcast news to study positive psychology, Morgantown resident Margery Carson trademarked the phrase "Happiness is a State of Mine" and launched a line of printed clothing aimed at boosting the state's mood. So far, her website offers West Virginia–themed Happiness T-shirts with short and long sleeves in both blue and white. There's also a vinyl decal. *happinessisastateofmine.com*

written by PAM KASEY

COURTESY OF FERNWEH BOUTIQUE; COURTESY OF STONEHOUSE LAVENDER FARM; COURTESY OF MARGERY CARSON

THIS MATTERS



DO THIS

Fly Direct

GET OUT AND SEE THE WORLD this summer! Morgantown and nearby Bridgeport have direct flights to four international airports with connections everywhere, plus two southeastern vacation destinations.

NORTH CENTRAL WEST VIRGINIA REGIONAL AIRPORT (CKB)

- Skywest dba United Express to Washington, D.C. Dulles International Airport (IAD): one flight daily, Sunday through Friday.
- Skywest dba United Express to Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD): one flight daily 7 days a week
- Allegiant Air nonstop to Orlando / Daytona Beach, Florida: twice a week October through mid-August
- Allegiant Air nonstop to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina: twice a week June through September

MORGANTOWN MUNICIPAL AIRPORT (MGW)

- Southern Airways Express to Pittsburgh International Airport: four flights weekdays, two on Saturday and Sunday
- Southern Airways Express to Baltimore Washington International: two flights daily

Safe Travels

IF YOU'RE GOING out of the country, the Monongalia County Health Department offers travel exams and counseling as well as prescriptions and immunizations for international travel. At the MCHD travel clinic, you can:

- find out what vaccines you'll need. These can vary over time—for instance, Brazil recently experienced an outbreak of yellow fever;
- get advice on traveling with your prescribed medications and the documentation you will need to get them through customs;
- make sure your current medications will not interact adversely with anything you may need to travel safely;
- get medication for traveler's diarrhea;
- get tips for dealing with long plane rides;
- get the answers to questions you might not anticipate, like whether you should apply your sunscreen or your mosquito repellent first.

Make your appointment with the travel clinic at least 4 weeks before your departure date.

Plan to take to your appointment a copy of your immunization record and the International Certificate of Vaccination if you have one, as well as a list of your allergies and any medications you are taking. Be prepared to explain your itinerary: what countries you plan to visit, what time of year you will visit them, what activities you have planned, and your accommodations. *453 Van Voorhis Road, 304.598.5119, monchd.org/travel-clinic.html*

THIS MATTERS TO

Mike Quick

MIKE QUICK HAS BEEN A BONDSMAN with Bill's Bail Bonds for almost a decade. The job requires him to remain on call at almost all hours—on a recent birthday, he arrived at the office at 7:30 a.m. and didn't get home until after midnight. We spoke with him about how the industry works and why he loves his job anyway.

interviewed by J. KENDALL PERKINSON | *photographed by* CARLA WITTFORD

On how he got started When I first started in the industry, you had to be a licensed insurance agent. I was an agent in Greenbrier County, selling home and car insurance. I had just started in the insurance business, so my income was pretty low. I started with Bill's Bail Bonds to supplement my income. But I really enjoyed the work. I enjoyed meeting the people, hearing some of their stories, and the relationships you build with them.

On how bonding works When an arrest is made, the defendant goes in front of a judge for an arraignment. The judge sets a bond. Let's say the bond is set at $10,000. In West Virginia, we are required by law to charge 10 percent, so we would charge $1,000 to whoever wants to come in and sign. The defendant makes contact with us, usually to reach out to their family. I try to explain to them how the process works, then we go to the court and sign a contract guaranteeing that the defendant will show up for all their hearings.

On helping families One of the things I enjoy about my job is trying to help people out in a really bad situation. Mom is devastated because her son just got arrested. She's upset and crying and has no idea what to do. To be able to calm her nerves and walk her through the process to get her son back is pretty fulfilling to me.

On media stereotypes About 95 percent of my job is office work. Very seldom do we have to go track somebody down like you see on *Dog the Bounty Hunter*. That gives our industry a really bad name. That's not what our business is all about. We're more about building relationships in the office and on the phone, not busting down doors at 3 in the morning carrying pistols and mace and handcuffs.

On getting to know defendants In the course of filling out their paperwork, I try to get to know people a little bit from a personal standpoint, because I just enjoy meeting people. But also from a business standpoint, the more I know about my clients, the easier it is to find them if they flee. I know what part of town they're hanging out in, who they like to run with, what things they're into.

DRINK THIS

Good Beans, Good Cause

A new roastery brings high-end coffees to town.

MORGANTOWN'S COFFEEHOLICS can now indulge their obsession and do a little good for WVU students at the same time with beans from Mountaineer Roasting.

As a student, Rusty Isaacs expressed his passion for coffee through jobs in cafes around town. When he became a co-owner of Mountaineer Roasting, he learned the craft with roaster David Morris of Nashville, Tennessee's 1910 Roasting Co.

But great coffee is not only about the roasting technique—it's also about the beans. Mountaineer Roasting's importer, Cafe Imports, works to bring small growers to the international market and to give small roasters access to specialty beans.

"We wanted to bring a higher quality of coffee to West Virginia," Isaacs says. "So our house coffee and our espresso are sweet and approachable without that dark bitterness that some people might be used to. And then we have several single-origin coffees that push the boundaries with a little more of the fruity, floral, and citrusy character that can be fun to dive into if you're into coffee."

Mountaineer Roasting is founded on a strong commitment to WVU. Later this year, the company will take a group of Business and Economics students to Guatemala to experience the supply chain of coffee from the source. As the company grows, Isaacs plans to expand the international educational experience and fund scholarships.

Mountaineer Roasting is selling wholesale across the state to coffee shops and restaurants and is just getting into grocery stores. You can taste the coffee at The Grind, Panini Pete's, Pies & Pints, and Sargasso. Isaacs invites people to stop by the roastery on the 5th floor of Evansdale Crossing—or order online. *mountaineerroasting.com*

written by PAM KASEY

EAT THIS

With a Twist

Get a taste of Philadelphia at Philly Pretzel Factory.

NEW JERSEY-BORN WVU STUDENT Kendon Spering had a revelation one day when her parents brought their hometown favorite Philly Pretzel Factory pretzels to a WVU tailgate. "We laid them out for everybody to eat, and everybody went wild over them and asked where they could get them—they were so excited," Spering says. "That's kind of the moment it clicked."

Spering, with her mother as silent partner, opened a Philly Pretzel Factory franchise in Suncrest Towne Centre in February.

Soft pretzels have been sold from food carts and at delis forever in Philadelphia. What makes a pretzel Philly-style? It's the shape, Spering says: "We twist it like an infinity sign."

Philly Pretzel Factory offers hand-twisted soft hot pretzels right out of the oven. And lots of choices: Philly pretzel-wrapped cheesesteaks, hot dogs, and sausages and a pretzel pepperoni melt with a variety of dips and sauces, as well as party trays. "They're good for tailgates, office parties, and sporting events," Spering says. "A Crowd Pleaser is 25 pretzels and a bottle of mustard for $15—it can feed a whole sports team. It's a great snack for the kids." *358 Suncrest Towne Centre Drive, 304.241.4767, @ppfmorgantownwv on Facebook*

written by PAM KASEY

COURTESY OF MOUNTAINEER ROASTING; COURTESY OF KENDON SPERING

SUPPORT THIS

Past and Repast

The Morgantown History Museum's annual Best Chef fundraiser is starting to have a history of its own.

SIX YEARS AGO, the Morgantown History Museum and the Daughters of the American Revolution started the Best Chef Cook-off to raise funds for the museum and to help pay for a statue of town founder Zackquill Morgan.

It's been a great success. Zackquill Morgan now stands on Spruce Street, and the event's increasing popularity has made it a fun way to raise money toward professional and dynamic exhibits at the museum.

At the annual August competition, local restaurateurs display their culinary expertise in hopes of earning the title Best Chef. The title comes with a cash prize, a trophy, and bragging rights for the year. The runner-up gets a trophy, too. And starting a few years ago, a third award goes to the winner of a specialty category that changes with each competition. Past years have challenged chefs to craft the best Italian and best Appalachian dishes; in 2018, the specialty category is Modernist Cuisine.

The showmanship of the competing chefs along with live music and live and silent auctions makes for a night of fun for all ages.

Lakeview Golf Resort & Spa hosts the event every year, and Morgantown Museum Commission chairwoman and museum coordinator Pamela Ball says it's common for hotel guests to follow their noses to the festivities. This has resulted in a wide variety of last-minute attendees, ranging from funeral directors to golfers. Ball loves having guests at the resort join in and experience the best of local cuisine and culture.

But one of her favorite aspects of the cook-off is the camaraderie among the competitors.

The event is the Morgantown History Museum's only annual fundraiser and plays a large part in raising awareness of the organization. "It's good for us, it's good for the chefs, and it's good for the public because of all the great food," Ball says.

The Best Chef Cook-off VI will take place Thursday, August 2. Planning is still underway, but tickets typically run around $30 and may be purchased from the Morgantown History Museum. *175 Kirk Street, 304.319.1800, morgantownhistorymuseum.org*

written by AUSTIN REMPEL

WHO'S THIS

Hats Out Bats Out

The West Virginia Black Bears are coming out of winter hibernation under the leadership of new manager Kieran Mattison.

WHEN THE WEST VIRGINIA BLACK BEARS take the field for their first home game of the 2018 season at Monongalia County Ballpark on June 21, spectators will be cheering from their stadium seats, hotdogs and Cracker Jacks in hand, as Manager Kieran Mattison guides his team from the dugout.

Mattison, who was named manager of the Black Bears in January, operates by a straightforward philosophy that he believes will prepare his players for success. "My plan is simple: to take advantage of each day we have to get better," he says.

A native of Anderson, South Carolina, Mattison played baseball on the collegiate stage as a right-handed pitcher for the East Carolina University Pirates. He moved on to a professional career in 2002, pitching five minor league seasons in the Kansas City, Cleveland, and Los Angeles organizations before continuing his playing career with various independent leagues and in the Chinese Professional Baseball League. In 2010, Mattison stepped away from the mound and turned his focus from playing the game to teaching the game, crediting many former mentors as his inspiration. "I was fortunate to play for many good coaches in my career," he says.

Mattison spent a couple of years coaching young players before moving to France, where he served as manager for the Paris University Baseball Club in 2013 and 2014. "That's when it became crystal clear that coaching and teaching was the direction I wanted to go," he says. "Throughout my playing career, I went through a lot of ups and downs. I try to take all those experiences and help guide the players I work with."

Currently in his second season as a manager for the Pirates system, Mattison comes to Morgantown after guiding the Pirates Dominican Summer League team to a winning record in 2017. Now he's ready to bring his knowledge and energy to the West Virginia Black Bears.

"This opportunity to manage the Black Bears is very attractive to me for the simple fact that I have the chance to impact and help our draft picks, as well as the younger players already in our organization, set a strong foundation of how to be a professional," he says.

This summer, Mattison hopes the community will make a trip to the ballpark to enjoy the family-friendly atmosphere while supporting the development of Morgantown's very own minor league team. "I encourage the fans to come out and see the future of Pittsburgh Pirate baseball players," he says.

written by KAYLYN CHRISTOPHER

COURTESY OF THE MORGANTOWN HISTORY MUSEUM; COURTESY OF WEST VIRGINIA BLACK BEARS

TRY THIS

Ready. Aim. Shoot.

A new shooting range and gun shop is hitting its mark in Sabraton.

DEFENSE IN DEPTH (DID) says it takes a 360-degree approach to defense—and it means that literally and figuratively. This state-of-the-art shooting range and gun shop caters to everyone: women, beginners, firearms enthusiasts, military, seniors, children, and law enforcement. It does that by emphasizing gun safety training, personal defense training, and skill enhancement through the use of shooting lanes, lessons, and a mind-blowing simulator room where you can experience realistic full-size self-defense scenarios or rid the world of zombies. Did I mention that you can shoot zombies?

When Glenmark had a vacancy in its Sabraton Plaza, owners Mark R. Nesselroad and Mark J. Nesselroad sought to fill the empty building with something that would provide value to the area. During a trip to Florida, the senior Nesselroad stumbled on an ultramodern firearms retail and training facility and quickly felt that there was a need for a similar concept in Morgantown. The Nesselroads partnered with former Centra Bank president and avid big game hunter Doug Leech Jr. and began researching the industry. "The need was not only to fill a future vacant space but also a void in the Morgantown-area community," says Mark J. Nesselroad. "We wanted to create a multifaceted, safe, comfortable, and exciting facility with expert staff dedicated to educating and informing the community about firearms."

DID has 16 shooting lanes for handguns or rifles that are outfitted with ballistic panels, a programmable target carrier and retrieval system, sound abatement, and ventilation. If you are a member of DID—memberships start at $40 a month—you get unlimited complimentary range use. It also offers beginner, intermediate, and advanced-level training courses. You can learn about active shooter response, youth firearm safety, precision shooting, and enhanced concealed carry. Training courses range from $50 to $150.

"At DID, someone who has never shot a firearm can learn firearm operation and safety basics in a training room and then become comfortable shooting in a dry-fire simulator with multiple laser-based guns designed to imitate real firearms," says Nesselroad. "He or she can then progress to laser-based and real firearms in a live-fire simulator, practice with rentable firearms to decide which best fits someone's needs before purchasing, and graduate to upper-level courses, technique training, safety exercises, and self-paced fun."

The 180-degree, 33-foot-wide simulator offers more than 800 life-size scenarios for training and entertainment. You are given a realistic laser or a CO2-operated training firearm, and then you step into the shooting zone and a scene unfolds before you—it could be dancing snowmen or a person breaking into your home. The simulator can also be rented—members get a 50 percent discount—and is popular for events like birthday parties, team-building activities, bachelor and bachelorette parties, and business and client meetings.

DID also has an impressive gun store with a wide selection of firearms, ammunition, magazines, sights, optics, knives, pepper spray, Tasers, holsters, and range bags. There is even an on-site gunsmith. The retail shop allows customers to try before they buy.

DID is hitting its target, and the response to its membership packages has far exceeded the owners' expectations. "We aren't a typical shooting range," Nesselroad says. "We place a strong emphasis on learning about firearms, proper shooting techniques, and personal safety. We believe a community educated and informed about firearms and defense is a safer community." *1389 Earl L. Core Road, 304.554.3363, defenseindepth.pro*

written by NIKKI BOWMAN
photographed by CARLA WITT FORD

Get Out of Town

There are great daytrips just outside Morgantown, but no place in West Virginia is too far for a weekend getaway. Here are some of our readers' favorite summer escapes near and far.

Cheat River

PRESTON COUNTY | 30 minutes to 1 hour

"The Cheat River is home to many memories for myself and my family," says Kali Harsh. "It began long before I was born, when my grandfather would swim across the river carrying my grandmother, who had never learned to swim. My family spent many summer days when I was a child swimming in the river, fishing, and taking float trips. Once, when we were in college, my older brother challenged me to a swimming contest to see who could swim the farthest underwater before coming up for a breath. I won, of course! Now, I am fortunate enough to share this beautiful place with my own children. They are only 7 and 4, but they know and love the 'Mighty Cheat River.'"

Coopers Rock

MONONGALIA AND PRESTON COUNTY LINE
20 minutes

"Growing up in Masontown and Morgantown, one of my favorite escapes was going to Coopers Rock, whether walking the many trails with a friend or two or hanging out at the overlook with a group," says Michael Saint Clair. "This day I was traveling back to Maryland after attending a family funeral. I just needed one more piece of home to fill the emptiness, so pulling in to the Rocks was just the ticket."

Mason-Dixon Historical Park

30 minutes

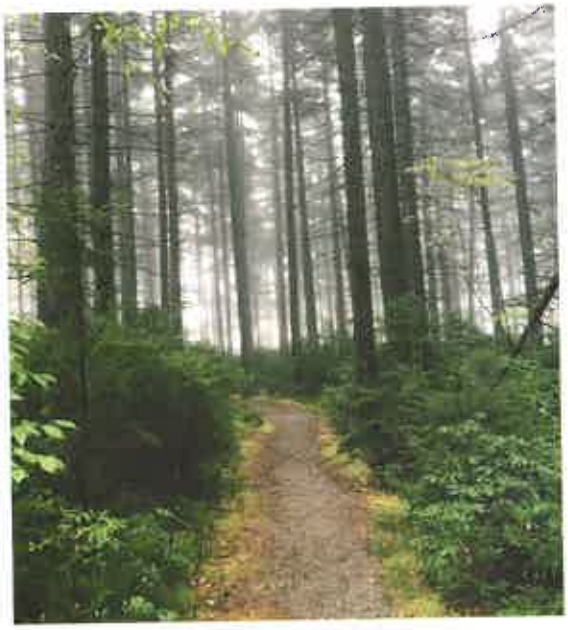
Pete Zapadka says he loves to visit "the most historic spot in our region." Mason-Dixon Historical Park commemorates the place where native American guides would not proceed one step farther westward—and surveyors Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon ended their survey of the famous boundary 21 miles short of their goal, the present-day southwest corner of Pennsylvania.

Tucker County

1.5 hours

"I spent many wonderful hours sitting on the long wraparound porch of my great-aunt's home near Red Creek in Tucker County, looking out to the pastoral beauty," says Barbara Stoop. "I've traveled all over the world (literally) and don't believe there are many places on this planet that can compete with Tucker County, in terms of breathtaking beauty." For a visitor to the area, she recommends Dolly Sods, Blackwater Falls, a drive through or a summer ski lift ride at Canaan Valley Resort, fishing in creeks all over, or a visit to the boutiques and restaurants in Davis and Thomas.

KALI HARSH; BARBARA STOOP; RON CRALTON; MICHAEL SAINT CLAIR



Gaudineer Knob

RANDOLPH/POCAHONTAS COUNTY LINE | 2.5 hours

Gaudineer Knob is the best place to visit in West Virginia, in Anna Katharine Tye's mind. "When I would go there with my father when I was younger, I would later look back on it and think it was a dream because I didn't think there could be a place this quiet and beautiful so close to my home town of Elkins. It's a very refreshing and quiet location that everyone should visit at least once in their lifetime."

Babcock State Park

FAYETTE COUNTY
2.5 hours

"Babcock State Park is a great escape to go for a picnic, get some fishing in, or go paddleboating for a nice summer day. When I'm at Boley Lake, I always have my camera with me ready to capture whatever catches my eye," says Kathy Gray. "They have cabins to rent, also."

Twin Falls Resort State Park

WYOMING COUNTY | 3.25 hours

"My family has been going to this park for years for Smith Family reunions, camping, picnics, to dine at the lodge, stay in cabins, hike the trails, go to the campfires, and so much more," says Christi Flanagan. "So many memories to cherish and more to be made."

The New River Gorge Bridge

FAYETTE COUNTY | 2.25 hours

Linda Shires and her husband, Rick, love the New River Gorge Bridge and the Fayetteville area. "We have whitewater rafted under the bridge and walked the 'catwalk' under the bridge numerous times. We've also flown above the bridge with Wild Blue Adventure Company as part of a scenic and aerobatic flight." Linda has also flown over the bridge with "Five Dollar Frank." She recommends ziplining, too.

Grandview at the New River Gorge National River

RALEIGH COUNTY | 3 hours

"Grandview is an amazing escape in any season, but spring and summer really cater to this idea," says Jen Jennings. "Take a hike on any of the trails, watch a show at Theatre West Virginia, or have a picnic on the grounds or at one of the shelters. It's the perfect place for a single person just wanting some time alone or for a family wanting to spend time together. You can snap photos of birds and deer playing about (my favorite activity) or take shade under a tree and enjoy the summer breeze blowing by. There are playgrounds for kids (or the kids at heart). If you do nothing but take in the beauty from the main overlook you'll not regret the trip."

ANNA KATHARINE TYE; KATHY GRAY; CHRISTI FLANAGAN; JEN JENNINGS; RICK SHIRES

Morgantown

magazine, published bi-monthly by New South Media, Inc., is the premier lifestyle magazine that celebrates West Virginia's fastest growing city—home to West Virginia University. From neighborhoods to music to food to football, we will keep you in the know about what's going on, who's doing what, and where you need to be. Whether you are relocating, a lifelong native, or an incoming freshman, MORGANTOWN is your go-to resource.

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A Trail Town in Maryland

Beat the summer heat with a trip to nearby Frostburg.

As temperatures climb this summer, a place by the name of Frostburg may start to sound appealing. Just an hour away off exits 33 and 34 of Interstate 68 in Maryland, Frostburg is named not for its frosty, 2,000-foot elevation—Morgantown sits at just under 1,000 feet—but for its early settlers, the Frost family. Still, its historical downtown and robust arts scene make it a great getaway for a daytrip or a long summer weekend.

Frostburg also sits on the Great Allegheny Passage, the 150-mile rail-trail that connects Pittsburgh and Cumberland. More than a million people ride the GAP each year. Many of them hop from town to town as part of a new and growing trail-based economy. The more time you spend in Frostburg, the more you'll notice bicycle culture.

The Great Allegheny Passage is only the most recent chapter in the town's long history on transportation corridors. In the early 1800s, Frostburg was one of the first communities on the National Pike connecting the Potomac and Ohio rivers—today's Historic National Road, U.S. Route 40. Those turnpike days are recalled by the **Thrasher Carriage Collection** of the Allegany Museum, one of the top horse-drawn carriage collections in the nation (*19 Depot Street, 301.777.7200, alleganymuseummd.org*). Turnpike traffic declined mid-century when the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal reached nearby Cumberland, so Frostburg changed its fortunes by mining coal and shipping it by rail to the main rail lines. The historic 1891 depot next door to the carriage museum now serves as the western terminus of the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad tourist train circuit from Cumberland and back. Check out the bicycle-themed **Switchbacks Sculpture Garden** on the

NIKKI HOWMAN

trail that connects the depot with the GAP.

But most of Frostburg's history centers on Main Street, the original turnpike through town. At the center of that is **Failinger's Hotel Gunter**. When it opened in 1897, it boasted 100 rooms, fancily clad bellboys, and a chef from New York. Later decades brought a gamecock fighting arena, a speakeasy, and a jail that housed prisoners under transport over the National Road while federal marshals stayed upstairs. You can see the jail today in the hotel's museum (*11 West Main Street, 301.689.6511, gunterhotel.net*). Also check out the **Frostburg Museum** (*56 East Main Street, 301.689.1195, downtownfrostburg.com*), where memorabilia include instruments from the Arion Band, said to be the oldest community band in the United States, still performing after 141 years, and the Braddock Stone carved highway marker.

The arts are bursting out all over Frostburg. Cheery murals brighten the columns of the **Frostburg Library** (*65 East Main Street*) and a parking lot at 19 South Broadway—and keep your eyes open for three robots on Main Street businesses. The community rescued **The Palace Theater** (*31 East Main Street, 301.687.0921, frostburgpalace.org*), established in 1914 in a pre-existing building, after multiplexes shut it down in the 1980s; today it shows indie, classic, and foreign films and hosts plays and music performances. **Mountain City Traditional Arts** (*25 East Main Street, 301.687.8040, @mountaincitytradarts on Facebook*) promotes Appalachian arts and artists and hosts occasional events. You can find new and used vinyl and vintage turntables at **Yellow K Records** (*19 South Broadway, 240.284.2035, @ykrstore on Facebook*), a hub for an active community of music lovers. Rare in a small town, the surprisingly large independent bookseller **Main Street Books** (*2 East Main Street, 301.689.5605, "Main Street Books Frostburg" on Facebook*) hosts literary events, and **Frostburg Fiber Depot** supports the fiber arts with enthusiasm through workshops and outings (*9 West Main Street, 240.284.2154, @frostburgfiberdepot on Facebook*).

PLAN YOUR TRIP

downtownfrostburg.com

visitfrostburg.com

visitmaryland.org

A trip to the campus of **Frostburg State University**—a five-minute drive or 10-minute walk from downtown—gives a feel for the academic side of Frostburg's economy and culture (*101 Braddock Road, frostburg.edu*). Opened about 1900 as a two-year teacher's college, the institution grew over the years and now offers a wide range of bachelor's and master's degrees and a doctorate in education.

When you've worked up an appetite, you can get breakfast, lunch, dinner, or just a slice of house-recipe coconut cream pie at **Princess Restaurant**, a diner that's been family-operated for four generations (*12 West Main Street, 301.689.1680, princessrestaurant.com*). For a lighter meal, try **Mountain City Coffeehouse & Creamery** (*60 East Main Street, 301.687.0808, mtncitycoffeehouse.com*) or stop in at **Lorenzo's Bakery** (*10 South Broadway, 301.689.6570, @lorenzosbakery on Facebook*) or the 60-year-old **Frostburg Freeze** (*225 West Main Street, 301.689.3020, @frostburgfreeze on Facebook*) for a sweet treat. Later on, sample the wines at **Toasted Goat Winery** (*10 East Main Street, 301.268.3010, toastedgoatwinery.com*). And for nightlife, have a look at the eclectic schedule at **Dante's Bar** (*16 West Main Street, dantesbarfrostburg.com*).

If you're making a night of it, you have several options. In addition to the Hotel Gunter, the **Allegheny Trail House B&B** is a farm-to-table bed and breakfast downtown (*156 East Main Street, 240.580.9795, alleghenytrailhouse.com*). The **Trail Inn B&B** sits right beside the trail and also operates a campground out back (*20 Depot Street, 301.689.6466, trailinnatfrostburg.com*).

Allegheny Trail House and Trail Inn make accommodations for bicycles and offer shuttle services, making Frostburg an especially good overnight for cyclists. But anyone can fill a weekend in this town of history, arts, and recreation.

written by PAM KASEY

NIKKI BOWMAN (3); JEREMIAH RAINES (2)

10 Great MORGANTOWN SANDWICHES

The Fourth Earl of Sandwich liked his meat between bread so he could eat neatly without interrupting his cribbage game—surely one of humanity's all-time greatest inspirations. But some versions of the layered lunch stack higher than others. Check out our picks for Morgantown's most heavenly handhelds.

written by PAM KASEY and JULIAN WYANT

CARL WHITFORD

SAIGON PHO KITCHEN: THE BANH MI

Ask Rajagopal Sundaram about the unexpected culture-meld known as banh mi, and he starts with a history lesson. "When Vietnam was a colony, the French ate cold cuts on baguettes, and they considered it only for the masters," he says. "After the French left, Vietnamese people marked the end of European arrogance by adding native ingredients"—like crunchy fresh and pickled vegetables and Vietnamese sauces. The sandwich became a fusion food, he says, offering the best of East and West.

Raj's wife Pookie's uncle sold banh mi on the streets of Saigon before he fled to Virginia in 1970. "We are doing exactly his recipe," Sundaram says—including fresh Vietnamese-style baguettes—with two tweaks. "We add a spicy-tangy-sweet-chili-salty housemade soy sauce for a little more kick. Second thing, we have the cold cut ham, but we also have grilled meats—chicken, steak, pork—and we marinate them in a Thai–Vietnamese lemongrass-ginger-honey sauce. That's what makes the Saigon Pho Banh Mi a little more distinctive and absolutely more delicious." *3109 University Avenue, 304.241.1814, @saigonphokitchen on Facebook*

Pookie & Raj Sundaram

— DISH IT OUT —

BANH MI

For pickled vegetables Vinegar, lime juice, salt, sugar, grated carrot and daikon (Asian radish)

For marinated chicken Soy sauce, sesame oil, honey, garlic, ginger, lemongrass (available at Asian market), four chicken breasts

Remaining ingredients
A fresh baguette or four crisp-crusted rolls, French pork liver pate, sliced fresh cucumber, chopped fresh cilantro, soy sauce, plus your choice of mayonnaise, sliced fresh jalapeños, and sriracha hot sauce

1 Combine pickling ingredients and grated carrot and radish and refrigerate for at least one day. **2** Mix marinade and marinate chicken in refrigerator for up to three hours. **3** Grill chicken and slice into 1"-thick strips. **4** Cut baguette into four sandwich lengths and split, or split rolls. **5** Toast bread in oven at 125° for 1½ minutes. **6** Spread pate on bottom bread. **7** Arrange remaining ingredients on bread to taste, and serve.

Yield: 4 sandwiches

DIRTY BIRD: THE VERA CRUZ

A fresh deli roll is piled high with shredded lettuce, tomato, and red onion, then nine ounces of fresh, deep fried, pepper jack–smothered chicken. Bacon, avocado, and jalapeño round out the flavor, with a zesty cilantro lime mayo to really tickle your taste buds. *301 High Street, 304.284.9599, "Dirty Bird Morgantown" on Facebook*

IRON HORSE TAVERN: BLFGT

What's the best way to freshen up an icon of the sandwich world? A simple, impactful remix. Iron Horse switches up the nostalgic BLT with fat-sliced green tomato breaded in a Cajun panko breadcrumb and deep fried to a crunch. That's not the only dazzling detail. The BLFGT is topped with high-quality Applewood smoked bacon and slicked with a Cajun remoulade. And for brunch, the BLFGT's buttered, crusty Italian boule is roofed with an over-easy egg that breaks on the first bite and drips delectable yolky-ness over all of it. You'll love every bite. *140 High Street, 304.296.6230, ironhorsetvrn.com*

CARLA WITT FORD; SHER YIP; JULIAN WYANT

THE GREEKS: GYRO

Most often found in its natural habitat of blue check deli paper, The Greeks' Gyro is an authentic concoction of seasoned, spit-roasted beef-and-lamb gyro meat with choice of tzatziki, hummus, spicy cheese, or tahini spread on pita and adorned with tomatoes, onions, parsley, and fresh-cut fries. Or sub in Greek Fries with feta and olive oil—transcendent. *331 Beechurst Avenue, 304.284.0055, thegreekswv.com*

APOTHECARY ALE HOUSE AND CAFÉ: PEPPER DELIGHT

One trick to Apothecary's panini is Phoenix Bakery's Italian bread. Vegetarian owner Grace Hutchens has perfected her Pepper Delight. "We've settled on mayo, pepper jack, goat cheese, banana peppers, mild jalapenos, and green pepper." Served with a basket of Utz chips and Hutchens' sour cream-based dip, it's bar food deluxe. *227 Chestnut Street, @apothecaryalehousecafe on Facebook*

FARMHOUSE CAFE: THE CAPRESE PANINI

For its Caprese panini, Farmhouse Cafe gets ciabatta from Pittsburgh's BreadWorks and tomatoes, mozzarella balls, and balsamic glaze from Pennsylvania Macaroni Company in the city's Strip District. But what elevates it is Chef Mark Shipley's housemade basil pesto. Chips, pasta salad, or fresh fruit on the side. *10000 Coombs Farm Drive, 304.777.2756, farmhousewv.com*

CLUTCH WING SHOP: SPICY FRIED CHICKEN SANDWICH

It may seem like a simple creation: fried chicken, lettuce, pickles, mayo, bread. But it's more than the sum of the parts. Between a seared, garlic-parmesan-butter-slathered Kaiser roll sits a bed of lettuce donned with pickles, an edible cushion for Clutch's famous spicy fried chicken—all of that garnished with house sweet chili mayo. *708 Beechurst Avenue, 304.212.5403, clutchwings.com*

CARLA WITT FORD; JULIAN WYANT; CARLA WITT FORD; KATIE GRIFFITH

TERRA CAFE: BLACK BEAN BURGER

Secrets to Terra's scratch-made Black Bean Burger include freshly cooked beans, peppers, onions, crimini mushrooms, and a house spice blend. The patty is seared and topped with lettuce, tomato, avocado, and drizzled with hot sauce, then sandwiched between homemade, toasted whole wheat pita slathered with cilantro-lime crème fraiche. Pair it with the delectable beet salad. *425 Industrial Avenue, 304.554.2233, terracafewv.com*

CRAB SHACK CARIBBA: CRAB CAKE SANDWICH

Crab Shack's switch from a Cajun-style to a Maryland-style crab cake has won diners over, says owner Bron Kayal. "We use a lot of high-quality lump crab meat and Old Bay seasoning in a mayo-cream base with a little Dijon mustard." Served on a buttery brioche bun with house tartar sauce and handcut Old Bay fries, it's a new town favorite. *420 Suncrest Town Centre, 304.599.4545; 69 Mont Chateau Road, 304.435.3469; crabshackcaribba.com*

WOODBURN SHANKS: KC ROYAL

The meat's the show here. Woodburn Shanks coats its quality cuts in housemade spice rubs, basks them in real hickory, cherry, and mesquite smoke, and serves them up Kansas City–style—original sauce on the side. Any sandwich with that kind of love behind it is going to sing. But our favorite, and owner Derrick Shanks agrees, is the KC Royal: sliced brisket with onion rings, melted provolone, and sauce. Make it a meal with baked beans, cheesy corn, jambalaya, and other great sides. *1616 Earl Core Road, 304.504.3047, @woodburnshanks on Facebook*

JULIAN WYANT; CARLA WITT FORD (2)

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Free Parking

Morgantown takes an in-depth look at why we can't have a little of what just about everyone wants.

WRITTEN BY **Pam Kasey**

CARLA WITT FORD

When High Street parking spaces turn over fast, life is grand. If you want to grab takeout or order flowers or pick up a dress that's been altered, you can find a spot, get in, and get out. Six times an hour is the sweet spot, parking officials say, and we're often pretty close to it.

Not long ago, parking on High Street took persistence and luck. Employees of downtown businesses parked there, and commuting students did, too, all day sometimes, shoving customers off to the periphery. Ticketing didn't stop it. What stopped it was when the Morgantown Parking Authority created the "green zone" meters in 2016. It raised parking from 50¢ to $1 an hour on high-demand blocks, with a two-hour time limit. It created a $100 ticket for flagrant violation—a disincentive powerful enough that the authority has resorted to it only a few times.

A lot of us grumbled about the extra quarters, but we like the outcome. "It's amazing how many more people park in the garages now," says MPA Executive Director Dana McKenzie. "You can come down any time of the day, and you're going to find a parking spot close to where you want to go."

That anecdote holds several truths. About our preference to park close and our tendency to pinch pennies, sure. But most instructively, about how a change in the price of parking often isn't about parking authority revenues—it's about nudging behavior. And it works.

On the scale of what's most disgruntling in life, downtown parking ranks right up there with taxes and the weather. Drivers gripe that they can't find parking, and that it's too far away. They squawk about rate increases that make parking turn over so they can find it. They bellyache when they get tickets, even when they're in the wrong.

We need parking regulation. It's one of the foundations of a vibrant downtown. But as the MPA's rules and rates have gotten more restrictive, some downtown merchants wonder if it's too much. *Morgantown* decided to take a look.

No such thing as a free space

To address the question right up front of why we have to pay for parking: simple supply and demand.

It was the 1950s when demand first overtook supply. The city created the MPA, and the MPA built a double-decker parking garage—the one at the corner of Pleasant and Chestnut streets that we use today when we visit Black Bear Burritos or Mountain People's Co-op.

The city set the MPA up as an "enterprise fund," meaning it pays its own way through parking revenues. Council passes ordinances related to parking and approves rate changes, but the city does not finance the MPA—parkers do.

Decades passed, meters were installed, lots were paved, garages were built, all to meet growing demand. Eventually, maybe 15 years ago, the supply downtown and in the Wharf District arrived at about its current 2,202 spaces on the streets, in lots, and in garages.

The MPA turned its attention in 2007 to a perennial problem with downtown parking. "It used to be, we stopped issuing citations at 6 p.m., and after that it was free parking until 9 a.m.," says McKenzie. He came on at the MPA in the mid-'90s, so he'd already seen a decade of changes at that time. "At 1, 2 in the morning you'd have as many people out on the street as at 1 in the afternoon. Why does the daytime customer have to pay but the nighttime customer doesn't? Then, when you would come downtown at 9 a.m., you could not find a parking spot on High Street. We talked to council and business owners, did some research, and turned it into 24-hour parking." The move had its detractors, but McKenzie says it worked. "That opened parking up tremendously downtown."

The city's 2,202 regulated spaces are not created equal. Over the years, the MPA has used its tools to differentiate zones,

from higher rates in the green zone to programs like discounted permits that encourage employees to park in the garages.

McKenzie took over as executive director of the MPA when Tom Arnold retired in 2017. Keeping an effective balance that reflects the nature of the community—in our case, one where demand trends up and a large state university means an active nighttime economy—is part of the expertise he brings as a Certified Administrator of Public Parking, a credential he earned over three years and maintains through continuing education.

Meter made

The MPA's status as an enterprise fund leads some people who are honked off about parking to ask questions. Is the authority charging unfair rates to fill its own coffers? Does the city use the MPA to pad its revenues? We reviewed the past eight years of revenues and expenses in detail.

The parking authority gets revenues from fees for the privilege to park and from fines for abusing the privilege. MPA revenues have come to a little under $3 million a year, in recent years: around $2.4 million in fees and $500,000 in fines.

It spends money enforcing rules and collecting fines, building and maintaining lots and garages, and introducing technology that improves parking and enforcement. MPA expenses vary around $1 million for about 13 employees' salaries and benefits, $800,000 to pay down the bonds on the Public Safety Building and Wharf District garages, and another $800,000-plus in capital expenses, maintenance, lot rent, credit card fees, insurance, and other operational expenses. Cash on hand at the end of the fiscal year runs between $1 million and $2 million.

Thanks a lot

Most affected by parking policy are the downtown merchants, and we talked with many of them. Some say parking is better than it's ever been. In fact, three of the five MPA board members own businesses on High Street: Board President Charlie McEwuen, owner of Tanner's Alley and in business downtown 42 years; Jeanne Hagan, owner of Pinocchio's Books and Toys; and Amy Dale, co-owner of The Elegant Alley Cat.

Among downtown merchants not on the MPA board, Apothecary Ale House and Café co-owner Grace Hutchens speaks the thoughts of several when she says, although $1 an hour and 24-hour enforcement seem a little heavy-handed, parking is distributed well and she likes conveniences like the credit card machines in the lots.

Others aren't as happy. Downtown businesses face a particular set of challenges. They compete with businesses outside city limits that don't pay business & occupation tax and whose employees don't pay the $3-a-week user fee. They compete with businesses inside city limits that have free

parking. They say expensive parking, or even a feeling on the part of the public that downtown parking is expensive or hard to find, can directly affect their livelihoods.

Hiring downtown can be tough, for example, especially hiring part-time employees for whom parking, on top of the user fee, eats up a fair share of their pay. The permits for the garages are too expensive for part-timers, at $45 a month for the cheapest, says Chris Evans, co-owner of Tin 202 at High and Pleasant. How about a permit structured for people who work fewer hours? It makes sense. And it's a request the MPA has under consideration, according to McEwuen.

Another business owner, one of several who preferred to speak off the record, suggests free parking away from High Street for business owners and employees. Satellite parking has been discussed before, McKenzie says, but a good site has never been identified.

A few business owners said their out-of-town customers could use better signage to find the garages, and more than one took issue with overzealous enforcement.

Some dissatisfaction might be solved by better marketing. The MPA offers a lot of programs for customers, merchants, and employees, but not everyone knows about them. One downtown merchant suggested in May that he'd like a way for customers to pay meters from their phones, be notified before expiration, and renew remotely. In fact, the MPA implemented the Parkmobile app in February to do just that. This isn't a business owner who pays no attention, but someone who's engaged and aware of business conditions and opportunities. He simply hadn't heard about it.

Seeking validation

But what downtown merchants most commonly ask for is free parking. Just a little. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings, maybe, 4 to 10 p.m. Some people who don't spend time downtown think it's impossible to find parking, the business owners say, or that downtown is overrun with students. Free parking would encourage them to give downtown another try.

It's not that simple, says McEwuen. If you offer free parking, downtown employees will use it, and it'll be harder for customers to find parking than if they were paying. He also thinks exceptions to the rule don't work out because they confuse people.

But there's a more fundamental reason the MPA doesn't offer free parking: It can't.

A condition of the MPA's bonds that finance the garages is that parking can't be offered for free. With regard to Sundays, for example, the MPA's line has long been, "We can't say it's free on Sundays, but we can tell you there's no enforcement."

It's a constraint L.J. Giuliani would like to help the MPA get out from under. He's the longtime owner of the nightclub 123 Pleasant Street and a board member of Mainstreet Morgantown and energetic downtown advocate.

"It's difficult to have a business downtown. We're taxed for this, we're taxed for that. A little flexibility from the MPA would help. But we're shackled because of this bonding that doesn't let the parking authority offer free parking during Black Friday weekend, a parade, or whatever event," Giuliani says.

He also argues for seasonal flexibility. Heavy enforcement when the students are in town. "But come down to Pleasant Street on a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday now and look at the parking garage," he said in late May. "We're lucky if it's one-quarter full. When students are away, that's when the merchants downtown need all the help they can get from the city and the parking authority. We've got to be creative with how we get bodies down here, and the parking authority is potentially one doorway we can use to open up downtown."

Giuliani thinks more flexibility would let the MPA be sensitive to town's annual calendar and to the needs of the merchants. "How can the parking authority move past just managing parking and be an ambassador for downtown?" he asks.

A double-decker issue

Some of the frustration blamed on parking may have another level. "People need to understand, it isn't a standalone problem, parking. Downtown has changed," says County Commissioner Tom Bloom. He was on city council and the parking authority from 1987 to 2001, so he has a longer and broader perspective than just about anyone.

"There used to be four women's shoe stores. Four different men's clothing stores. Five women's clothing stores. A department store. We've lost the stores that brought the people downtown as a

MPA PROGRAMS FOR DOWNTOWN PARKING

For any downtown visitor

- Credit card payment in garages and lots
- Pay for surface parking from smartphone with the Parkmobile app
- 10-minute grace period
- 15-minute "This One's On Us" courtesy ticket, 3x/year, 1x/month per license plate
- Pay citations online or in courtesy boxes in lots
- Pre-loaded cash cards to use in the gated garages
- Garage permits structured for residents and students
- Dead battery service

For employees

- Garage permits structured for employees, with discounts for multiple months

For businesses and organizations

- Two-hour "green zone" meters to encourage fast turnover in highest-demand spaces
- Merchant validation for customer parking in gated garages
- Meter bags to reserve street meters for construction and moving trucks
- Flat-rate event parking in city garages
- Enforcement leniency during major events

family." Boutiques and unique shops are important, he says, but stores that serve broader needs also have to be part of the mix. "If I had a business downtown, especially a restaurant, I'd be frustrated at losing that major clientele."

What would improve the situation at its root, Bloom says, is housing downtown for professionals—people who have money to spend and who would raise the tenor of downtown. "And then offer stores that would serve those individuals." It's in line with a long-term vision some have called "SoWal" and Bloom calls "SoHigh" that, in contrast to the lively, student-centered bar scene nearer campus, would be more of a shopping district and restaurant row.

But meanwhile. Even being familiar with the complex dynamics of parking, Bloom makes the very same suggestion many others are making: Free parking. "Say, from 4 to 9 p.m., even just Thursday, Friday, Saturday." Reminded of the parking authority's experience that free parking gets abused, he says, "Well, that's a problem that has to be dealt with. This would bring in the older crowd, the families, the group we've lost downtown."

And in line with his feeling that parking is not a standalone problem, he proposes the merchant community give something, too. "The stores have to stay open. The thing at a mall is, they're mandated to stay open—you're not mandated downtown." He notices a group of business owners downtown who want to shake things up—maybe some of the same ones who want more flexibility in the parking rules—and sees an opportunity. "I think Dana (McKenzie) is willing to work with people, but there has to be something more than just free parking."

Pressed on the question, McKenzie backs up Bloom's confidence that he's flexible. "If we could come up with a plan to where we could truly keep the ones who are living and working downtown from parking on the streets, we could look at it. I'm not saying it's out of the question—it's just something we'll have to keep working at."

The "no free parking" bond constraint would still have to be addressed.

Ramping up

In January 2019, the MPA will pay off the Public Service Building parking garage at Spruce and Walnut streets. That will free up $360,000 a year. The authority has projects in mind for some of that freed-up revenue: Installing monitoring cameras in more locations, for public safety. Putting canopies over the parking garage entrances so drivers don't have to reach for the ticket dispensers in the rain. Upgrading garage fire suppression systems.

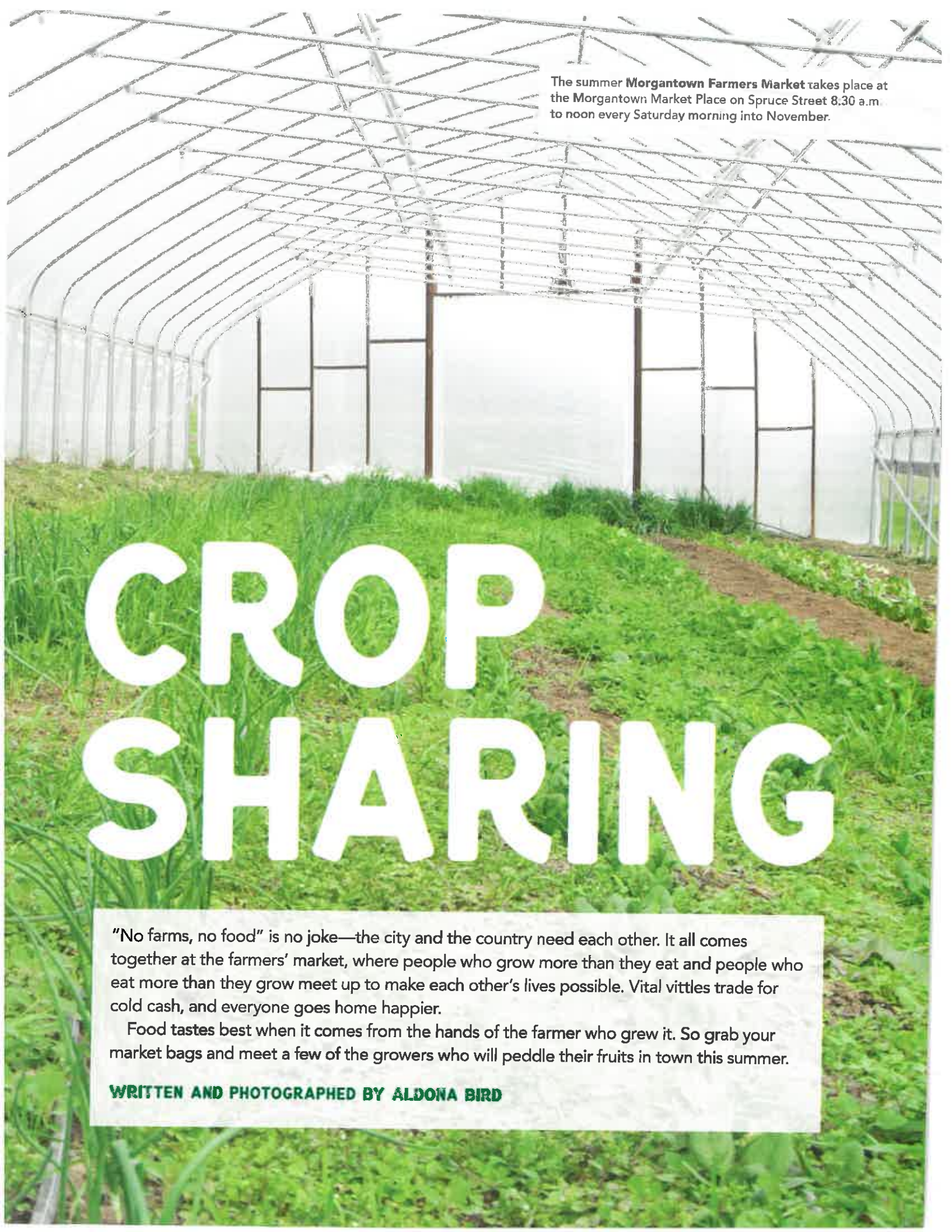
And in 2021, the Wharf District garage will be paid off, freeing up another $400,000-plus a year and releasing the MPA from the "no free parking" constraint. Although McKenzie couldn't say yet whether all of this means parking will become cheaper, he hints that there are discussions.

The downtown merchants' suggestions should be part of those discussions. How about free parking for them and their employees inside the garages? How about free parking for the public Thursday through Saturday evenings?

But note this. As these two garages are just about paid off, there's talk of a new garage in the southern part of downtown to accommodate activity that increased with the opening of the Monongalia County Justice Center in 2015. The Wharf District garage cost around $6 million in the early 2000s, McKenzie says; he estimates a 500-space garage downtown in today's market, with land acquisition and modern pay and gate technology, might run closer to $15 million.

What would a $15 million bond mean for future parking rates? Could we avoid that expense with more support for alternative transportation? Should we at least stay away from bond strictures that tie the hands of the MPA? All of that needs to be part of the discussions, too.

Anyone can attend the MPA board's monthly meetings at 3 p.m. on the second Wednesday of every month except July. And McKenzie invites anyone with a parking issue to call him at the MPA office. *300 Spruce Street, 304.284.7435, parkmpa.com*



The summer **Morgantown Farmers Market** takes place at the Morgantown Market Place on Spruce Street 8:30 a.m. to noon every Saturday morning into November.

CROP SHARING

"No farms, no food" is no joke—the city and the country need each other. It all comes together at the farmers' market, where people who grow more than they eat and people who eat more than they grow meet up to make each other's lives possible. Vital vittles trade for cold cash, and everyone goes home happier.

Food tastes best when it comes from the hands of the farmer who grew it. So grab your market bags and meet a few of the growers who will peddle their fruits in town this summer.

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY ALDONA BIRD

STEMPLE BROTHERS FARM

On a Preston County mountain, looking out over their sprawling farm, brothers James and Darwin Stemple agree: Fall is their favorite season to cultivate this particular hilltop patch. As they describe how fall foliage lights up the expansive view, their love of the land and their work shine brighter than the blazing maple leaves in their verbal image.

As third-generation farmers, the Stemple brothers' roots in local agriculture run deep. They garden on three of their 415 acres, leaving much of the 120 cleared acres to pasture for livestock. Gardening on the mountaintop gives them a jump on the growing season—late frosts settle in the valley, leaving mountaintop crops safe with about a 10-day head start. High tunnels and a greenhouse also help the brothers extend their growing season.

Beef cattle rotate through the pastures below the hilltop garden. Sheep, geese, turkeys, rabbits, chickens, ducks, bees, and barn cats also have space on Stemple Brothers Farm. James and Darwin raise some of these animals for meat, but others are farm fixtures, with the honking geese serving as guard animals.

This year, the Stemple brothers tapped a natural resource on their farm: Boiled down to syrup, the sap of the maple trees on the mountains makes for a sweet addition to their produce and meat products.

Beehives provide another sugar source. Beekeeping inspired James and Darwin to move fully to organic farming and to consider pursuing organic certification to add to their good agricultural practices, or GAP, certification. Bees thrive when the plants they pollinate are free of agricultural poisons.

Seeing a need in the community for larger-scale access to small-scale farm produce, Darwin helped to establish the Preston Growers Co-Op, which sells farm fresh food to residents and school systems.

"One of the joys of farming—you eat well," Darwin says. His brother James agrees. "You have the best food in the world."

For the second year this year, shoppers at the Morgantown Farmers Market can enjoy Stemple Brothers Farm products.

"Stemple Brothers Farm" on Facebook

HARMONY FARM

Sky Harman's Australian Shepherd mix, Moses, needed a job. Harman tried training him to be a herder, but that career path was a dead end for the pup. Still, "the moment I got him onto a farm, I realized what I'm supposed to be doing," Harman says.

To fulfill this calling, he established Harmony Farm in 2012. On not quite four acres in Cheat Lake, he raises a variety of produce aimed at self-sustainability—spiritual and emotional as well as in his fridge.

An equal priority for Harman is to better society through access to healthy food. The first step is to produce the healthy food. Harman raises robust and healthy plants using foliar feeding with seaweed extract, fish emulsion, calcium phosphate, compost teas, and other supplements. Applying nutrients to the leaves of plants can make for fast and effective absorption. He also adds natural nutrients to the soil.

Besides a wide variety of vegetables he grows in the field and in high tunnels, Harman also raises chickens and bees, and this season he's trying his hand at mushrooms and ginger, too. He's also producing value-added products like sriracha sauce, tomato products, pickled peppers, and other preserved produce.

Harman volunteered in Puerto Rico over the winter to rebuild farms destroyed by hurricanes. Now that he's back and cultivating his own farm, he says he's "figuring out how to make our food available to low-income people—low-income and underserved." A step toward that this year is to offer low-income shares in his Community Support Agriculture operation, or CSA.

In addition to the CSA and sales at the Bridgeport Farmers Market, Harman has been a vendor at the Morgantown Farmers Market for six years. While he considers his produce to be "beyond organic," he doesn't advertise it as such. "I think our food speaks for itself," he says. *@harmonyfarmwv on Facebook*

EVANS KNOB FARM

"I learned how to garden with my grandmother," Kathy Evans says. Her grandfather taught her to repair and use farm equipment. Evans uses all of that knowledge farming with her husband, Reid, on Evans Knob Farm in Bruceton Mills. The land has been actively farmed by four generations of the Evans family, and Evans says she is "tickled pink" to be teaching her grandchildren how to farm when they visit.

The Evans women have farmed while their husbands had jobs off the farm. Evans hopes her granddaughter will take to farming and continue the family tradition.

Running the 130-acre family farm is no small task. Three acres are devoted to vegetable gardens, about 30 acres to woodland, and the rest is divided between pastures and hay production. Seven beef cattle, two dairy cows and a heifer, 27 ewes and rams, and 32 lambs enjoy the rolling pastures. More than 700 broiler chickens, meat rabbits, layer hens, khaki campbell ducks, and dogs and cats are also at home on the farm.

The sheep provide both meat and wool. Evans shears and processes the wool into yarn, hats, scarves, gloves, rugs, felted ornaments, and other fiber art. Her felted sculptures and ornaments have seasonal themes such as chicks and ducklings in the spring, pumpkins and pilgrims in the fall, and Santa and stockings in the winter.

Evans also makes handmade soap using her Jersey cows' milk and locally grown herbs. This spring, the Evanses added maple syrup to their production after a family friend built a syrup evaporator for them.

They've been bringing their farm products to the Morgantown Farmers Market since the market first opened about 16 years ago. They also offer CSA shares.

While their mix of products has varied over the years, their dedication to organic farming has remained steady. Evans Knob Farm was certified USDA Organic for many years but gave that certification up in 2013 and opted instead to become Certified Naturally Grown—a farmer-to-farmer rather than a government certification. This commitment to the small-scale farming network goes hand in hand with their love for the Morgantown Farmers Market.

"I've worked with a lot of the farmers, and I've cried with a lot of the farmers," Evans says. "It's empowering to be a part of that." *"Evans Knob Farm" on Facebook*

CHARM FARM

Mike Kwasniewski read a book. To be exact, *The Dirty Life*, by Kristin Kimball. The author had fallen in love with a farmer, and together they'd established a whole-diet CSA program in upstate New York.

Inspired by this tale, Kwasniewski visited the farm and then decided to do something similar here in West Virginia. He established the Charm Farm in 2012. He and his mother, Pam Kwasniewski, operate the over-400-acre farm outside Elkins. They sell at the Morgantown and Elkins farmers' markets and run a CSA, and they're adding a farm stand.

Members of the whole-diet CSA have year-round access to a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, fresh bread, dried goods, meat, eggs, maple syrup, and other products weekly in a take-what-you-need system.

Shoppers at the Morgantown Farmers Market get almost as wide a variety of goods, farm fresh and certified USDA Organic. Because the Kwasniewskis offer a year-round farm share, they use three high tunnels for season extension for early greens and cold storage so they can offer root crops and winter squash during colder months.

Farm work goes on just about year-round. In winter, before the growing season gets underway, Kwasniewski partners with Dry Fork Maple Works, tapping trees and boiling sap. This spring the Kwasniewskis built a new barn and started work on a greenhouse and also started all their plants from seed before planting out eight to 10 acres of produce. Through the summer and fall, Kwasniewski cans and preserves some of the food grown on the farm.

In their busy schedule of daily farm tasks, including caring for 60 head of cattle and a couple hundred laying hens, the Kwasniewskis find the time to host an annual barn dance. The event, scheduled for June 30 this year, includes a farm fresh dinner and farm tours.

Kwasniewski hopes to inspire others as he was inspired. But since he isn't a writer, he hopes his vegetables and other farm fresh products will inspire the community to eat healthier meals. He says buying directly from the farmer, knowing where your ingredients are coming from, "heightens the kitchen experience." *thecharmfarmcsa.com*

FUEL LOCAL

West Virginia's gas station convenience store chains are fighting for their share of a tough market. Even so, they're doing great things for the communities they serve.

WRITTEN BY Zack Harold

COURTESY OF GOMART

The fuel gauge is flashing. You're headed out on a summer road trip, not even 30 minutes out of town yet. The needle is hovering over "E." The kids already guzzled their drinks, and they're squirming in their seats. And you're craving a candy bar—or an energy shot. Or both. Luckily, you're closing in on an exit.

The tall gas station signs come into view, sprouting like weeds. Which will you choose? The convenience store industry is incredibly competitive. Each store is fighting to have the cheapest gas. The most pumps. The cleanest bathrooms. The biggest selection of snacks.

Would the decision be easier if you knew one of those stops is West Virginia–owned and –operated, and the company is committed to giving back to the communities it serves?

You're in luck. West Virginia has three: **GoMart** of Gassaway, Beckley's **Little General Stores**, and Morgantown-based **BFS**.

MEET THE FAMILY

Although filling stations are as old as the automobile, the modern gas station convenience store combo is a relatively recent invention. For decades, state law made it illegal for West Virginians to pump their own gas. Stations were full-service, manned by attendants who would fill your tank, check your oil, and wipe your windshield. Drivers seldom left their cars when stopping for gas. Some stations sold candy, cold drinks, eggs, and bread, but it wasn't central to the business model. Gas was a good money-maker all on its own.

Then times began to change. In 1970 the state legislature made it legal for people to pump their own gasoline, and attendants began to disappear. Drivers started emerging from their cars at gas stations. Around the same time, it was becoming harder to make money on gas alone. The price at the pump was rapidly increasing, and stations fought to have the lowest prices possible. This sent profit margins through the floor and station owners scrambling for other ways to make money. They began to focus on drawing customers inside their stores. Interstate exits would never be the same.

The company now known as GoMart got its start in the early 1900s when brothers Fred, Charles, and Rod Heater supplied fuel to paddleboats on the Little Kanawha River. The family then moved into the bulk petroleum business before entering the gas station business. And in 1970, they installed the state's first self-service gas station in Shinnston, dubbing it "Go Tron."

The family opened its first GoMart convenience store in Gassaway in 1971 and, over the following decades, it would become the largest convenience store chain in the state. Responding to industry changes, GoMart experimented with adding proprietary food service like West Virginia-Fried Chicken and GoMart Delis before moving into branded franchise options.

BFS got its start a little later. The company began in 1974 when founder Marshall Bishop, who had managed a Southern States store in Sabraton, purchased his own seed and feed shop in Bruceton Mills. He called it Bruceton Farm Service. Bishop installed his first gas pump at the store in the early 1980s, hoping to capitalize on the ever-increasing interstate traffic. "We called it 'the gas house.' It wasn't much bigger than a Porta Potty," says daughter Hayley Graham, BFS's marketing director. "We had a full-service guy in there who would pump gas."

When the gas station proved profitable, Bishop opened a small convenience store in Mountain Lake Park, Maryland. He then built another full-service gas house in Cheat Lake, where Interstate 48 and West Virginia Route 43 now meet. "As he did these one at a time and saw success, he just kept going," says Garet Bishop, Bishop's son and the company's CFO.

Bishop started adding restaurants to his stores in the early 1990s, recognizing that quality food options would help bring customers through the doors. The company tried opening its own sub shop but realized convenience store know-how didn't translate to the restaurant business. Instead of giving up and leasing the space out to a restaurateur, however, Bishop opted to become a Subway franchisee. This allowed him to draw on the sandwich chain's expertise and

COURTESY OF GOMART; NIKKI BOWMAN (2)

brand recognition while maintaining control of the operation. "He wanted to control what was going on in the store," Garet Bishop says.

Now BFS locations include franchises of many popular fast food chains like Burger King, Little Caesars Pizza, Subway, and Tim Horton's. BFS further expanded its offerings in 2000, when it was granted six liquor licenses in West Virginia, allowing those locations to sell spirits. The company now has eight locations selling liquor.

About the same time Bishop was starting BFS, Harry Gilbert formed Little General Stores in Beckley. Current company president Greg Darby joined the gas station convenience store chain in 1980, when it had just eight locations. He had a newly minted accounting degree from WVU and became the company's comptroller. But he didn't enjoy sitting behind a desk and soon transitioned to operations, setting up real estate deals, signing up franchises, and buying, building, and leasing stores. Darby bought the company in 1999 with Cory Beasley, who is now the CEO. There were 38 stores when they took over the company, and the men have since taken the company in the same direction as their in-state competitors—nearly quadrupling the number of locations in the process.

Each of the chains now has stores scattered all over West Virginia. BFS and GoMart also operate in surrounding states. All three companies are growing, and each offers a variety of fast food franchise options. Little General has even started building freestanding restaurants on properties close to its convenience stores. "I think they all feed off of each other," Darby says.

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

The convenience store business isn't as lucrative as it once was, given West Virginia's stagnant economy. "The pie's only so big. We're all fighting for pieces of same pie," Darby says. Gas pumps at Kroger, Sam's Club, and Walmart stores have only added to the competition. "They're giving you discounts on gas in order to get you to go buy groceries," he says.

Store owners do what they can to make sure their stores have a fighting chance. When Darby plans new locations, he goes up in a plane to study crossroads and watch traffic patterns. He puts his breakfast-oriented franchises in areas that see large amounts of morning traffic. "Going home, they're going to get beer and snacks and bread and milk, or maybe a burger. You try to market your stores on that," he says. He also counts rooftops while he's in the air. Lots of structures nearby is a good indicator of a solid customer base. "Most people are going to go within two miles of their house. You're going to be their destination," he says.

GoMart assistant manager Terry Smith demurred when asked about her company's strategy for locating stores, but said it's pretty similar to Little General's approach. "It's location, location," Smith says. "You have to look at where you feel you're going to get the biggest bang for your buck."

BFS takes stock of the convenience stores and restaurants already present in a community and allows that to dictate what kind of store it will build and which franchises it will put in the location."If the area is lacking food offerings, we may build a larger store … and have multiple brands offered. If there are many food offerings, we may open a convenience store with some grab-and-go food only and no branded fast food," Graham says.

Staying competitive is about more than having the right location, though. Customers care just as much—if not more—about their experience at the pump and in the store. In this area, innovation is key. Take Sheetz. The Pennsylvania-based chain has 568 stores in six states, including 58 in West Virginia. Seven of those are in the Morgantown market, where Sheetz has been doing business since the early 1980s. The company has long been committed to innovation—in 1993, it was the first in the industry to adopt touchscreens for its made-to-order food operation. The company rolled out online ordering in 2013. In December 2017, it introduced voice-activated ordering through Amazon's Alexa virtual assistant.

In 2015, Sheetz opened its first-ever cafe location, near WVU's campus. There are no gas pumps at this 15,000-square-foot store, but it offers an extensive grocery section as well as indoor and outdoor seating areas. The company has since opened three more cafe locations based on this model.

Sheetz recently launched another new store design with its location off Grafton Road at Interstate 68, which features an enhanced seating area and a streamlined food ordering and checkout line. This company-wide commitment to innovation is best summed up by a mission statement concocted by former president Steve Sheetz: "Our mission is to put the Sheetz of today out of business."

COURTESY OF SHEETZ

BFS

FOUNDED **1974**

STATES DOING BUSINESS **WV, PA, MD, OH**

LOCATIONS **68,** including **34 in West Virginia**

EMPLOYEES **2,000, 1,000 in WV**

FRANCHISE OPTIONS **Burger King, Dairy Queen, Huddle House, IHOP, Gloria Jean's Coffee, Little Caesars Pizza, Subway, Tim Horton's, and Little Sandy's**

LITTLE GENERAL

FOUNDED **1974**

STATES DOING BUSINESS **WV**

LOCATIONS **119**

EMPLOYEES **1,600**

FRANCHISE OPTIONS **Subway, Arby's, Dunkin' Donuts, Steak Escape, Taco Bell, and Godfather's Pizza**

GOMART

FOUNDED **early 1900s**

STATES DOING BUSINESS **WV, OH, VA**

LOCATIONS **122, 102 in WV**

EMPLOYEES **1,500, 1,200 in WV**

FRANCHISE OPTIONS **Subway, Little Caesars Pizza, and Burger King**

Funny thing—West Virginia's convenience stores want to put the Sheetz of today out of business, too. Inroads by it and other chains have local companies watching industry trends and customer expectations. BFS is always exploring new franchise options. Its new locations have larger footprints, modern decor, big windows, and LED lighting. "It's very inviting. If you're a mom with your kids, you feel safe coming inside. If you're Bubba the truck driver, you feel welcome. We meet the needs of everybody," says Ryan Dias, BFS's merchandising director.

Little General is also on a constant drive to update its stores—often tearing down old locations to start again with a clean slate. Darby compares it to the way fast food restaurants completely rebrand and remodel their stores every few years. "They know image is important." In the old days, convenience stores were usually around 1,200 square feet. Now, a new Little General location is usually around 7,000 square feet. The stores have more windows and bright LED lights. The exteriors are covered in brick and stucco. "Before, we'd just put a block building up. It looks more like a restaurant now. It's more attractive," Darby says. "People like new."

GoMart has a different focus. Although constantly working to keep locations up to date, Smith says the company isn't concerned with making sure their stores are the newest on the block. "People look at big, shiny, and new, but sometimes that doesn't necessarily give you that hometown feel," she says. "If we've got great people working at our locations, that's what's going to keep people there."

The pressure is on. Sheetz has plans to open two more locations in West Virginia this year—one in Ohio County and another in Cabell County—and announced In April it would hire 2,500 people company wide, including 240 new employees in West Virginia. Alongside this rapid expansion, the company is also earning heaps of accolades: *Fortune* has included Sheetz on its list of "100 Best Companies to Work For," "Top 12 Best Places to Work for Women," and "Top 35 Best Workplaces for Millennials."

> "People look at big, shiny, and new, but sometimes that doesn't necessarily give you that hometown feel. If we've got great people working at our locations, that's what's going to keep people there."
>
> **Terry Smith, assistant manager at GoMart**

COMMUNITY CENTER

Convenience stores aren't just for highway pit stops, of course. Most of our interactions with them have nothing to do with long road trips—just the hustle of daily life. "If it's breakfast time and you're out of eggs, where are you going to go? You're going to run down to your local convenience store," says Traci Nelson, executive director of the West Virginia Oil Marketers and Grocers Association (OMEGA) lobbying group.

The stores become so much a part of the landscape of our lives that it's easy to take them for granted. But convenience stores play an important role in our state's economy, employing thousands of West Virginians in communities that don't have much else going on.

Little General is the 24th-largest employer in the state, according to the March 2017 data from Workforce West Virginia, the latest available. The company employs about 1,600 people statewide. Just one restaurant might have 30 to 40 employees, while a convenience store has about 10. GoMart ranks 31st on the list, employing 1,500 people companywide and about 1,200 in West Virginia. BFS, which ranks 51st, has more than 2,000 employees and around 1,000 in the Mountain State.

The convenience store industry also has a long tradition of philanthropy—one that goes much further than placing fundraising jars at the cash register. In addition to supporting local sports teams and churches, BFS regularly raises money for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Alzheimer's Association, and the Chestnut Mountain Ranch boys' home. "Marshall, our father, he loves to give back. That's one of his main drives in his life," says Hayley Graham. "He's instilled that philosophy into the company."

Little General, meanwhile, has raised $3 million for the Norma Mae Huggins Cancer Research Endowment Fund. The company also donates $100 to the fund for every three-point shot WVU's men's basketball team makes. Darby and company donated $32,400 for the 2017–18 season.

For years, Little General has also given out $1,000 college scholarships to West Virginia high school seniors. The company handed out 20 this year, for a total of $300,000 since the program began. It's all a reflection of Darby's philanthropic philosophy: "If you can, you should," he says. "I didn't grow up with much. It's nice to be able to go back and give."

GoMart stores regularly work with Toys for Tots, Relay for Life, senior citizens' groups, and Project Graduation. The company was also the first corporate sponsor of the Children's Home Society of West Virginia and supports athletic teams in the communities it serves, as well as WVU and Marshall University athletics. "We are part of the community," Smith says. "I think it's valuable to our business. But it's the right thing to do."

And although the convenience store business is fiercely competitive, the industry also works together for the common good through OMEGA. The group runs two major fundraisers for the Children's Home Society of West Virginia each year: selling paper flowers around Mother's Day and hosting a fall golf outing. OMEGA has raised $2.4 million for children's charities since 2003, including $125,000 in 2017.

Nelson says it's a natural outgrowth the industry's commitment to the communities it serves. "People think of these stores as big corporations," she says. "But it's your friends. It's your neighbors."

The Mountains Are Calling

Make your weekend into a micro-vacation with these short itineraries. Each destination is located just a few hours' drive from Morgantown, giving you more than enough time to escape into the woods and make it back for work on Monday.

written by ZACK HAROLD

CANAAN VALLEY

Though settlers named this upland valley for the Old Testament land of milk and honey, don't call it KAY-nuhn. Locals say kuh-NAYN. Pronunciation particulars aside, outdoorsy types will have to agree this largely undisturbed wilderness is the Promised Land.

Blackwater Falls State Park The main attraction here is the 57-foot cascade, colored an amber red thanks to acid from hemlock and red spruce needles. But Blackwater Falls also offers miles of scenic hiking and biking trails and fishing and boating on Pendleton Lake.

Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge Established in 1994, this 16,550-acre refuge is home to nearly 600 species of plants and 300 different animals, some usually found as far north as Maine and Canada, thanks to the Allegheny Mountains' cool, moist climate.

Purple Fiddle If the rain sends you indoors or you just want a night out, head into tiny, charming Thomas, where you'll find an eclectic blend of shops and restaurants. But everybody's favorite is The Purple Fiddle, which offers live music most Thursday through Sunday nights.

NIKKI BOWMAN; (3); ELIZABETH FORD

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Once the capital of the state's timber industry, Pocahontas County now offers some of the most idyllic woods in the state—thanks to the creation of the Monongahela National Forest. You'll know you're getting close once the service bars start dropping off your phone.

Greenbrier River Trail With 78 miles of easy terrain for hiking, biking, or horseback riding, you can do the whole length—or set up basecamp at a B&B, cabin, or state park campsite along the way, and tackle the trail one section at a time.

Cass Scenic Railroad See the past in action as antique steam-powered locomotives push passengers along the same rail lines once used to haul big trees from these hills. Spend the night in one of Cass's renovated company houses—or a caboose.

Green Bank Observatory The world's largest radio telescope is a major tool in the study of black holes and faraway stars, as well as the search for extraterrestrial life. Tours run from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily through Labor Day.

NIKKI BOWMAN; CARLA WITT FORD (2); STEVE SHALUTA

SENECA ROCKS

This jagged ridge of Tuscarora quartzite ranks right up there with the Capitol dome and the New River Gorge bridge on the list of iconic West Virginia landmarks. But Seneca Rocks isn't just a pretty picture—the area contains some of the best high adventure anywhere in the state.

NROCKS Outdoor Adventures
No rock climbing experience is necessary at this outdoor adventure park. Guests scale the crags using steel rungs, but fear not—everyone gets strapped into harnesses that are safely locked into guide lines. The park also offers lodging and zipline tours.

Seneca Caverns Journey deep into the Earth and marvel at the clamshells, fossilized coral, and other sea creatures still trapped in the limestone of this 4.5 million-year-old cave. But dress appropriately—the cave remains 54 degrees year-round.

Sinks of Gandy This popular spelunking destination runs three-quarters of a mile underground. You won't see any road signs marking its location, but some internet sleuthing will help you find your way. The sinks are on private land—the owners don't mind if you visit; just be respectful.

CARLA WITT FORD; NIKKI BOWMAN; COURTESY OF WV DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE; H POON

The Scene

APR 19 • WVU ERICKSON ALUMNI CENTER

WVU Center for Service and Learning Engagement Celebration Reception

The WVU Center for Service and Learning presented its Excellence in Civic Engagement Awards April 19 at the WVU Erickson Alumni Center, during its 13 annual Week of Engagement.

Each year, the CSL accepts nominations for these awards from both the WVU campus and the Morgantown community. This year's honorees included Blake Humphrey, Student Award for Excellence in Community Service; Morgan King, Student Award for Excellence in Community Engagement; Omega Phi Alpha, Outstanding Student Organization; Eric Murphy, Faculty Award for Excellence in Community Engagement; Li Wang, Faculty Award for Excellence in Service-Learning Instruction; Sonja Wilson, Staff Award for Excellence in Engagement; and Empty Bowls Monongalia, Outstanding Community Partner.

Community leaders representing nonprofit partner organizations attended the event to celebrate service and engagement and to network with WVU students, faculty, and staff. — Catherine Whitworth

1 Ed Cole, Sonja Wilson, Savannah Lusk, and Morgan King **2** Emerson Murphy and Eric Murphy **3** Shea Lamanna and Janet Weeks **4** Omega Phi Alpha: Sierra Landacre, Sayward Gorman-Kramer, Courtney Carver, Amanda Brawley, Jaden Dawson, Gillian Brooks, Hattie Rowe, Jess Soto, and Maddie Carroll **5** Kristi Wood-Turner, Lindsey Rinehart, Melissa Adkins, Catherine Whitworth, and Andrew Facemire **6** Blake Humphrey **7** Bill Kawecki and Nancy Young **8** Tammy Miller and Mike Miller of Empty Bowls Monongalia, Catherine Whitworth

COURTESY OF THE WVU CENTER FOR SERVICE AND LEARNING

Calendar

Your local guide to life, art, culture, & more
JUNE/JULY 2018

June

JUNE 1–3, 6–10

Peter and the Starcatcher
WVU Creative Arts Center, 1 Fine Arts Drive 304.381.2382, Wed.–Sat. 7:30 p.m., Sun. 2 p.m., 304.381.2382, wvpublictheatre.org
A young orphan and his friends meet a starcatcher in training. They must keep a trunk full of precious cargo from falling into the wrong hands. From pirates and jungle tyrants to unlikely heroes, this play explores the depths of greed, despair, duty, and love. $11–$23

JUNE 2

Morgantown Farmers Market
Morgantown Market Place, Spruce Street Sat. 8:30 a.m.–noon, 304.291.7201 morgantownfarmersmarket.org
Local produce, breads, meats, cheeses, crafts, and more every Saturday through the summer.

Deckers Creek Trail Half Marathon and Trail Mix Festival
Deckers Creek Trail, Sat. 8:30 a.m.–noon montrails.org
13.1-mile course that descends 800 feet from Masontown to downtown Morgantown. Bus shuttle to start, course and finish line photos, chip timing, great finish line food, unique awards. Live music includes Chris Haddox of Stonefly Four at 10 a.m. and Vincent Farsetta at 11. All are welcome to enjoy the festivities.

High Street Bazaar
Courthouse Square, Sat. 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
Local art, antiques and collectibles, and food vendors. First Saturdays through August.

Empty Bowls Monongalia Spring Gala
Benton Grove Bed & Banquets, 154 Benton Grove Road, Sat. 6 p.m., ebmon.org
Enjoy a fun evening and a delicious dinner and support Empty Bowls' work to reduce food insecurity in Monongalia County. $125 per person

JUNE 2–3

Old Morgantown Glass Show and Sale
VFW Post, 340 Holland Avenue, Westover Sat. 10 a.m.–4 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m.–3 p.m. 412.217.2083.
Morgantown-made glass. Collectors' seminars. $5

Opekiska and Hildebrand locks open
Sat.–Sun. 7 a.m.–4 p.m., 724.725.5259 uppermon.org
A rare opportunity to lock through to the uppermost Mon River. Last lock-through 30 minutes before closing. Call for more information.

JUNE 22 Brassy Washington, D.C.-based outfit **Black Masala** is part of the new generation of go-anywhere brass bands. Opening set from Portland, Oregon's **Tanagra**. $10

123 Pleasant Street, Fri. 8 p.m., 304.292.0800, 123pleasantstreet.com

JUNE 4

Cheat Lake Farmers Market
2223 Cheat Road, Mon. 4–7 p.m. @cheatlakefarmersmarket on Facebook
Mondays until October.

JUNE 8–9

Relay for Life of Monongalia County
Westwood Middle School, 670 River Road Fri.–Sat. 7 p.m.–7 a.m., 304.223.7378 relayforlife.org/monwv
Raise awareness and money for cancer research. Register online.

NEARBY **St. Spyridon Greek Food Festival**
St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church Pinnicinnic Avenue & Factory Street Clarksburg, Fri.–Sat. 11 a.m.–8 p.m. 304.624.5331, stspyridon.wv.goarch.org
All our favorite Greek foods plus music, dancing, and more—the 17th year for this popular festival.

JUNE 8–10, 14–16

The Rattlesnake's Kiss/The Clock Strikes Noon
M.T. Pockets Theatre, 203 Parsons Street, Thurs. Fri., and Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 2 p.m., 304.284.0049 mtpocketstheatre.com
Two gripping tales of the frontier directed by Mara Monaghan. $10 / $13 / $15

JUNE 9

NEARBY **Concert Series: Allegheny Reign**
Mason-Dixon Historical Park 79 Buckeye Road, Core, Sat. 6 p.m. masondixonhistoricalpark.com
Take a blanket and a chair and sit back and enjoy some bluegrass at the amphitheater at the park. Adults $5, under 12 free

JUNE 11

Joggers + Lagers
Various locations, Mon. 5:30 p.m. @generationmorgantown on Facebook for location each week
Join Generation Morgantown any Monday for a two-to-four-mile jog around town. Joggers + Lagers is at your own pace, open to all, kid- and dog-friendly, and full of neighbors ready to cheer you on in meeting your goals.

JUNE 14

10th annual Taste of West Virginia
Morgantown Marriott at Waterfront Place Two Waterfront Place, Thurs. 5:30–8:30 p.m. 304.598.9500, redcross.org
Sample foods from the area's best restaurants and support American Red Cross disaster relief efforts. $25/person; $40/couple

LATE JUNE THROUGH JULY Plan now! **Blueberry picking** started end of June / beginning of July in 2017 and lasted through July.

Blueberry Ridge Farms, Tom Moran Lane Fairmont, 304.368.8294 @blueberryridgefarms on Facebook

McConnell Berry Farm, 340 Old Sawmill Road, Independence, 304.291.0015, mcconnellberryfarm.biz, by appointment only

JUNE 14–16

Waterman's Feast
Hill & Hollow, 709 Beechurst Avenue, Thurs.–Sat. hillandhollowwv.com
Can't take dad to the beach? Treat him to the cuisine of the Chesapeake Bay right in town.

JUNE 14–17

Greater Clarksburg Kennel Club Dog Show
Mylan Park, Thurs.–Sun. 8 a.m.–5 p.m., "Greater Clarksburg WV Kennel Club" on Facebook
You don't have to own a dog to love a dog show. Hundreds of dogs, owners, and handlers come from surrounding states and farther to compete. Free; parking $5

JUNE 15

Bungee fitness workout
Soar Fitness Studio, 729 Fairmont Road, Westover, Fri. 6–7 p.m., 304.241.1015 @generationmorgantown on Facebook
Join Generation Morgantown for a fun new workout class at Soar Fitness Studio. Limited to 10. Reserve online. $15.90 + fee

Parsonsfield with Meadow Run
123 Pleasant Street, Fri. 8 p.m., 304.292.0800 123pleasantstreet.com
Harmony-driven Massachusetts folk rock. Morgantown's Meadow Run opens. All ages. $10/$12 day-of

JUNE 16

NEARBY **Second annual Goat Gallop 5K**
Arthurdale, Sat. 9 a.m.–noon goatgallop5k.wordpress.com
Enjoy Arthurdale's New Deal district and gallop past the friendly goats. Run, walk, or roll—strollers and wheelchairs welcome. Untimed 1-mile race for 10 and younger. $25

Return of a Champion: Efforts to Restore the American Chestnut
West Virginia Botanic Garden 1061 Tyrone Road, Sat. 10 a.m. 304.322.2093, wvbg.org
The American chestnut was once prized for telephone poles, railroad ties, fence posts, and house construction. A fungus introduced through shipping from Asia killed 10 billion trees in the 1900s. Mark Double details efforts to bring it back. Most appropriate for adults. Register online. Members free; non-members $15

NEARBY **Appalachian Blacksmith Association Hammer-In**
Prickett's Fort State Park Fairmont, Sat. 10 a.m.–4 p.m. prickettsfort.org
See some of the best blacksmiths in the region. Demonstrations of traditional and modern blacksmithing. $8, seniors 60+ $6, kids 6–12 $4, 5 and under free

NEARBY **Seventh annual Summer Music Festival**
Alpine Lake Resort, Terra Alta, Sat. noon–11:30 p.m. 304.789.2481, alpinelake.com
Silas Powell & The Powell Family Band, Back in the Day, Moonlight Drive Band, Savage Road, Guilty Pleasure Band/Storm Creek Rising, and Paul Burger. Take lawn chairs and blankets, but no coolers—food and refreshment available on-site. $10; children 7–12 $5

NEARBY **Come Together Beatles Tribute**
Monongahela Aquatorium, 200 Railroad Street Monongahela, PA, Sat. 7:30 p.m. monaquatorium.org
Visit our downriver neighbors an hour north to enjoy weekend tribute performances through August. $10

JUNE 20

Scratch Programming
Morgantown Public Library, 373 Spruce Street, Wed. 10 a.m.–2:30 p.m., 304.291.7425 morgantown.lib.wv.us
Students will create animations, computer games, and interactive projects. Grades 3 to 6. Registration required. $20

JUNE 20–24

A Hatful of Rain
WVU Creative Arts Center, 1 Fine Arts Drive, Wed.–Sun. 304.381.2382, wvpublictheatre.org
Korean War veteran Johnny Pope becomes hooked on morphine in a military hospital. When he moves into an apartment with his wife and brother, his addiction has drastic repercussions for the whole family. Check website for details.

JUNE 21

Gaelic Storm
Metropolitan Theatre, 371 High Street, Thurs. 7 p.m. morgantownmet.com
Country-music folks adore their storytelling, bluegrass-heads love the instrumentals, Celtic fans love their devotion to tradition, and rockers relish their passion. $28–$39 + service fee

JUNE 21–23

WV Black Bears Season Opener
Monongalia County Ballpark, 2040 Gyorko Drive, Granville, Thurs.–Sat. 7:05 p.m., 304.293.7910 westvirginiablackbears.com
Cheer our very own West Virginia Black Bears on as they kick off their 2018 Minor League Baseball season with three games against the State College Spikes. Friday is a fireworks show. $8.50–$12.50

JUNE 22

Young at Art: Impressionistic Marker Painting
Spark! Imagination and Science Center, Mountaineer Mall, 5000 Green Bag Road, Fri. 4–7 p.m. 304.292.4646, sparkwv.org
Visitors will use markers to create artwork inspired by the impressionists. Exhibits open for exploration. Children $6, adults $2

Earth Moon Sun
WVU Planetarium, White Hall 135 Willey Street, Fri. 5 p.m. and 6 p.m., 304.293.4961 planetarium.wvu.edu/shows
Fulldome Planetarium Show for children. Reserve online.

The Cadillac Three's Long Hair Don't Care Tour
Metropolitan Theatre, 371 High Street, Fri. 8 p.m., 304.291.4884 morgantownmet.com
Featuring songs from their new album, Legacy, this band is a must-see for country, blues, and rock and roll fans. All ages. $20–$35 + service fee

JUNE 23

NEARBY **Hill Billy Roubaix**
Mason-Dixon Historical Park, Core, Sat. 10 a.m. masondixonhistoricalpark.com
A 74-mile bicycle race through the back roads of West Virginia and Pennsylvania. Free to spectators.

JUNE 23–24

Stihl Timbersports Pro Lumberjack Competition & Festival
Mylan Park, Sat. 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Sun. 10 a.m.–6 p.m.
Mid-Atlantic & Southern Qualifier Competition Saturday, U.S. Wood Chopping Championships Sunday. See all your favorite events:

JULY 21 Kids enjoy more than 60 scheduled events at **MedExpress Kids' Day**, including games, crafts, a giant sandbox, and gifts from local organizations. Free

High Street downtown with information booths at Dairy Queen at 444 High Street and Citizens Bank at 265 High Street Sat. 10 a.m.–2 p.m., downtownmorgantown.com

springboard chop, single buck, and more. $9; children 6–12 $3

JUNE 24

WORTH THE DRIVE
Wine & All That Jazz Festival
University of Charleston, 2300 MacCorkle Ave SE, Charleston Sun. 2–10 p.m. @fundfortheartswv on Facebook
A full day of renowned jazz musicians, superb regional wines, and phenomenal food. $30, 35 day-of

JUNE 28–30

WV Black Bears vs. Mahoning Valley
Monongalia County Ballpark, 2040 Gyorko Drive, Granville, Thurs.–Sat. 7:05 p.m., 304.293.7910 westvirginiablackbears.com
The West Virginia Black Bears face the Mahoning Valley Scrappers. Fireworks on Friday. $8.50–$12.50

Miss WV Scholarship Pageant
Metropolitan Theatre, 373 High Street, Thurs.–Sat. misswestvirginia.net
The three-night competition crowns Miss West Virginia.

JUNE 29

NEARBY **Grkmania**
Prickett's Fort State Park Fairmont, Fri. 7–8:30 p.m. prickettsfort.org
Three generations of the Grkman family perform traditional Slovenian polkas and waltzes along with Grkmania-style button box accordion music. Free

July

JULY 4

4th of July Party
Triple S Harley-Davidson 7300 Willie G Avenue, Wed. noon–3 p.m., 304.284.8244 triplesharley-davidson.com
Cookout with live music by Johnny FreakBand. Food provided by Stone House Restaurant of Farmington PA. Proceeds benefit Harper Endowment Fund. $5 donation to eat; military and first responders eat free.

Celebration of America's 4th of July
High Street and Hazel Ruby McQuain Riverfront Park, Wed. 6:30–11 p.m., 304.292.0168 mainstreetmorgantown.com
Morgantown gets patriotic with a High Street parade at 6:30, music at the amphitheatre after, and fireworks around 10. Free.

JULY 4–6

WV Black Bears vs. Williamsport
Monongalia County Ballpark, 2040 Gyorko Drive, Granville, Wed.–Fri. 7:05 p.m., 304.293.7910 westvirginiablackbears.com
The Black Bears face the Williamsport Crosscutters. Fireworks on Friday. $8.50–$12.50

JULY 6

Tales of the Maya Skies and Stars of the Pharaohs
WVU Planetarium, WVU White Hall, 135 Willey Street, Fri. 8 p.m. and 9 p.m., 304.293.4961 planetarium.wvu.edu/shows
Tales of the Maya Skies tells the story of the incredible observations, calculations, and history of the Mayan culture. At 9 p.m., travel to ancient Egypt to see how science was used to tell time, make a workable calendar, and align huge buildings. Reserve online.

JULY 7

Opekiska & Hildebrand locks open
Sat. 7 a.m.–4 p.m. 724.725.5259, uppermon.org
A rare opportunity to boat the uppermost Mon River. Last lock-through 30 minutes before closing. Call for more information.

High Street Bazaar
Courthouse Square Sat. 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
Local art, antiques and collectibles, and food vendors. First Saturdays through August.

NEARBY **WV History Alive: Benjamin Franklin**
Prickett's Fort State Park Fairmont, Sat. 2–4 p.m. prickettsfort.org
Revolutionary, founding father, inventor, journalist, diplomat, and so much more, Benjamin Franklin is one of the most extraordinary men in history. See him live. Free

JULY 7–9

WV Black Bears vs. Auburn
Monongalia County Ballpark 2040 Gyorko Drive, Granville Sat. & Mon. 7:05 p.m., Sun. 4:05 p.m., 304.293.7910 westvirginiablackbears.com
The Black Bears take on the Auburn Doubledays. $8.50–$12.50

JULY 9

The Felice Brothers with Twain
123 Pleasant Street, Mon. 7 p.m. 304.292.0800 123pleasantstreet.com
Welcome the Felice Brothers back to the 123 stage from upstate New York, with Twain. $15

JULY 12–14

Attack of the Killer Tomatoes
Hill & Hollow, 709 Beechurst Avenue, Thurs.–Sat. hillandhollowwv.com
A full meal of creative courses built around the season's most varied and versatile fruit.

JULY 13

Young at Art: Tibetan Wishing Banner
Sparki Imagination and Science Center, Mountaineer Mall, 5000 Green Bag Road, Fri. 4–7 p.m. 304.292.4646, sparkwv.org
Tibetan wish or prayer flags promote peace, compassion, strength, and wisdom. Visitors will make banners on silk. Children $6, adults $2

JULY 14

NEARBY **New Deal Festival**
Arthurdale, Sat. 10 a.m. newdealfestival.org
Celebrate the history of this New Deal community with a crafts and farmers market, a vintage car and tractor show, music, and activities for all ages. Meet Eleanor Roosevelt! $10, ages 5–11 $5

Nature Photography Workshop
West Virginia Botanic Garden 1061 Tyrone Road, Sat. 10 a.m. 304.322.2093, wvbg.org
Photographer Dave Smaldone will teach simple digital camera settings, give compositional tips, and encourage seeing creatively in natural settings. Beginner and intermediate photographers ages 12+ welcome. Register online. Members $15; non-members $25

NEARBY **Park Concert Series: Hillbilly Gypsies**
Mason-Dixon Historical Park, 79 Buckeye Road, Core, Sat. 6 p.m. masondixonhistoricalpark.com
Take a blanket and chair and enjoy bluegrass. Adults $5, under 12 free

JULY 15 & JULY 28 PopShop Summer Concerts

If you haven't seen a PopShop concert yet, put these on your calendar. They're the final performances for PopShop's 2018 Performance Camp 1 and 2 bands—great music and a feel-good time.

Summer Concert 1: Crab Shack Caribba, 69 Mont Chateau Road, Sun. 1 p.m., popshopwv.com

Summer Concert 2: Palatine Park, Fairmont, Sat. 1 p.m., popshopwv.com

JULY 17–19

WV Black Bears vs. State College
Monongalia County Ballpark 2040 Gyorko Drive Granville, Tues.–Thurs. 7:05 p.m. 304.293.7910 westvirginiablackbears.com
The Black Bears get a second chance at the State College Spikes. $8.50–$12.50

JULY 20

Stars: Powerhouses of the Universe
WVU Planetarium, WVU White Hall, 135 Willey Street, Fri. 5 p.m. and 6 p.m., 304.293.4961 planetarium.wvu.edu/shows
STARS explores the powerhouses of the universe and our relationship with the night sky through history. Reserve online.

JULY 20–22, 26–28

About Time
M.T. Pockets Theatre, 203 Parsons Street, Thurs., Fri., and Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 2 p.m. 304.284.0049 mtpocketstheatre.com
A moving and compassionate story from the perspective of a couple who have spent a lifetime together and know their time is coming to an end. Listen in as they talk about everything under the sun, especially food, sex, children, and aging. $15, senior citizens and military $13, students $10

JULY 23–27

NEARBY **Reading of the Declaration of Independence**
Prickett's Fort State Park Fairmont, Mon.–Fri. noon prickettsfort.org
History tells us it would have taken about three weeks for news of the signing of the Declaration of Independence to reach the outer edges of colonial expansion. Come out and hear the reading of one of the greatest documents ever written. $8, seniors $6, 6–12 $4

JULY 24

Jenny Lewis
Metropolitan Theatre, 371 High Street, Tues. 8 p.m. 304.291.4884 morgantownmet.com
Lewis has been on tour behind her critically acclaimed 2014 album The Voyager, which gave the L.A.-based singer-songwriter her first Top 10 album and highest chart debut yet, earning "Best of the Year" accolades from *Rolling Stone*, *Spin*, *Billboard*, and many others. $25

JULY 24–26

WV Black Bears vs. Aberdeen
Monongalia County Ballpark, 2040 Gyorko Drive, Granville, Tues.–Thurs. 7:05 p.m., 304.293.7910, westvirginiablackbears.com
The West Virginia Black Bears take on the Aberdeen IronBirds. $8.50–$12.50

JULY 26–29

14th annual MountainFest Motorcycle Rally
Mylan Park, 500 Mylan Park Lane, Thurs.–Sun., 304.826.0311 wvmountainfest.com
Morgantown welcomes 50,000 motorcycle enthusiasts back with four days of fun including live musical performances by Bret Michaels, Montgomery Gentry, and Alabama. To date, MountainFest has raised $700,000 for Mylan Park and its charities. $50 online for an adult full-event pass; other prices vary

JULY 27

Teen Lock-In
Morgantown Public Library, 373 Spruce Street, Fri. 6–11 p.m., 304.291.7425, morgantown.lib.wv.us
Take part in this year's National Teen Library Lock-In for ages 12 to 18. Food will be served. Arrive no later than 6:15 p.m. for access to the building. Free

NEARBY **Outdoor Concert: Bill Stalnaker Night Moves and KWT Blues Band**
Prickett's Fort State Park Amphitheater, Fairmont, Fri. 7 p.m., prickettsfort.org
Back by popular demand, Bill Stalnaker Night Moves and KWT Blues Band are pure Blues entertainment. Multi-award winning artist Stalnaker has worked with legendary musicians like Johnnie Johnson, Willie "Big Eyes" Smith, and Big Bill Morganfield. The KWT Blues Band plays early blues music in its own way. Free

JULY 27–29

WV Black Bears vs. Brooklyn
Monongalia County Ballpark 2040 Gyorko Drive, Granville Fri. & Sat. 7:05 p.m., Sun. 4:05 p.m., 304.293.7910 westvirginiablackbears.com
The West Virginia Black Bears face the Brooklyn Cyclones. Fireworks on Friday. $8.50–$12.50

JULY 28

Opeklska and Hildebrand locks open
Sat. 7 a.m.–4 p.m. 724.725.5259, uppermon.org
A rare opportunity to boat the uppermost Mon River. Last lock-through 30 minutes before closing. Call for more information.

JULY 30

Mon County Fair Kick-off Parade
High Street, Mon. 7:30 p.m.

JULY 31–AUGUST 4

Mon County Fair
Mylan Park, 500 Mylan Park Lane, Tues.–Sat., 304.291.7201 moncountyfair.org
Carnival rides, agricultural and livestock events, pageants, food vendors, a quilt show and other exhibits, plus motorsports. $10

Upcoming

AUGUST 3

Different Voices Common Experiences Public Reception
Monongalia Arts Center, 107 High Street, Fri. 6–8 p.m. 304.292.3325, monarts.com
All works of art in this exhibition are created by individuals living with mental illness. The MAC takes a reduced commission to ensure the greatest possible profit is passed on to these artists.

AUGUST 5–7

WV Black Bears vs. Batavia
Monongalia County Ballpark 2040 Gyorko Drive, Granville Sun. 4:05 p.m., Mon. & Tues. 7:05 p.m., 304.293.7910 westvirginiablackbears.com
Cheer our West Virginia Black Bears on as they take on the Batavia Muckdogs. $8.50–$12.50

Town founder Zack Morgan's 1700s homestead, at left, stood long enough to see the streetcar era

FOR MORE PHOTOS of Morgantown's past, check out wvhistoryonview.org

The Mountain People's Co-op brought colorful charm to the site

Founder's Choice, Under Pavement

Where was the best site for a house in all of the wild land that became Morgantown? Likely, it was the corner of Front Street and Bumbo Lane—today's University Avenue and Fayette Street—because that's where town founder Zackquill Morgan chose to build his homestead in the late 1700s. His house passed down through his family and stood there until 1930. For decades after that, a service station operated on the lot. Then, in the 1970s, the Mountain People's Co-op was established in a building on that site; it did business there until it moved to 131 Pleasant Street in 2015.

This spring, the building was razed for a small, but choicely sited, WVU parking lot.

Then & Now is published in partnership with WVU Libraries' West Virginia & Regional History Center. *wvrhc.lib.wvu.edu*

written by PAM KASEY

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