



Spring home improvement tips

## AROUND THE STATE

### Court to hear cases in Point Pleasant

POINT PLEASANT (AP) — The West Virginia Supreme Court will travel to Mason County this week to hear arguments in three cases.

Tuesday's visit to the Mason County Courthouse in Point Pleasant is part of the Legal Advancement for West Virginia Students program, also known as LAWS. The program teaches students about the judicial system.

The program began in 1999. About 5,300 high school and college students in 28 counties have participated since then.

### Agency to take over Mingo golf course

WILLIAMSON (AP) — The Twisted Gun golf course in Mingo County is getting a new owner.

The Mingo County Redevelopment Authority is in the process of assuming ownership of the 18-hole course at Wharncliffe.

Authority executive director Leasha Johnson tells the Williamson Daily News that Twisted Gun's current owners asked the authority if it would be willing to accept ownership.

Johnson says the golf course is one of the county's crown jewels and the authority wants it to remain open.

### 2 allegedly arrived intoxicated to court

MORGANTOWN (AP) — Two men face charges after police say they arrived intoxicated to a West Virginia courtroom.

The Dominion Post reports that the two were charged Friday after they appeared in Monongalia County Magistrate Court.

Magistrate Court Judge Jim Nabors said Ronald Plavoko was held on contempt of court for being intoxicated after a Morgantown police officer issued a breath test.

Colton Riggleman was cited by the Morgantown police for public intoxication and released to the custody of a family member.

Riggleman accompanied Plavoko to court. Plavoko was scheduled to appear at a hearing.

### Bucolic W.Va. county offers promise

CIRCLEVILLE (AP) — Between mountain ranges and two national forests in West Virginia lies an Appalachian tourism frontier with serene, unspoiled countryside and some of the best rock climbing in the region.

Pendleton County's remoteness serves as both a selling point and an impediment to several companies that have invested in tourism in recent years. It has helped the area stay serene — but also off the beaten path for travelers.

Among the outfits betting on the area is the NROCKS Outdoor Center at the foot of the Nelson Rocks, which has expanded in recent years.

A recent study commissioned by the Appalachian Regional Commission cites the Nelson Rocks and Seneca Rocks, a formation to the north in the Monongahela National Forest, as keys to the area's "tremendous potential as a tourism destination."

### Rectory to be razed at fire-gutted church

BENWOOD (AP) — The rectory at St. John Catholic Church in Benwood will be razed with the fire-gutted sanctuary.

That decision was announced Friday by the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston after an engineering review, according to media reports.

Fire raged at the church March 30.

## Shepherdstown Council hears event requests

BY MARY STORTSTROM  
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SHEPHERDSTOWN — Several event and activity requests were discussed at the Shepherdstown Town Council meeting Tuesday evening:

- Josephine Lo, a member of the Jefferson High School Junior Statesmen of America, requested a portion of King Street be reserved for a Bikes for the World donation, scheduled for April 26.

Bikes for the World is a nonprofit program that distributes donated bicycles in nations in the developing world, and Lo said the bikes collected

in Jefferson County will go to Costa Rica, where people can use them to get to work or school.

In 2009, Lo said, another Bikes for the World collection was held in Shepherdstown and approximately 80 bicycles were donated.

Lo said local churches, Rotary Clubs, police departments and Shepherd University have been notified of the upcoming event.

The drop-off point for donated bicycles in Shepherdstown will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in front of Town Hall.

- Members of the Shepherdstown Music and Dance group requested street closures during the town's annual May Day event, which will be held on May 2.

According to Tom Connelly, the project coordinator for the Shepherdstown May Day Celebration, the group will begin setting up maypoles and a sound system on the lawn of McMurrin Hall at 9 a.m.

King Street will be closed for dancing for two half-hour periods, from 11 to 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 to 3 p.m.

A parade will line up on Church Street and begin walking its route on German Street at noon, and Connelly invited the mayor and members of the Town Council to walk in the parade.

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## Check the Technique

Journal photo by Ron Agnir

Cody Griffith practices a kickflip on his skateboard at a makeshift skatepark in Martinsburg.

## Berkeley appoints engineering director

BY SAMANTHA CRONK  
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MARTINSBURG — Following the sudden death of Berkeley County Engineering Director Todd Doub, the Berkeley County Council has appointed a new director to fill the position.

Following an executive session Thursday afternoon, council members unanimously selected Brian Ross as the new engineering director for the Department of Engineering, Permits and Inspections, with a start date of May 1.

Ross was one of the applicants interviewed when the position was first created in 2014 and was one of the finalists for the position before Doub was ultimately selected, said County Administrator Alan Davis.

"We had a very, very strong pool of candidates (during the initial interviewing phase) and (Ross) interviewed for the position. So, the council elected to offer the position of engineering director to him," Davis said.

Ross, 42, is an Inwood resident who has been in the construction industry for about 20 years. In a telephone interview, Ross said he was excited for the opportunities presented to him and looked forward to enhancing the work flow and customer service aspects of the department.

"This position, this department, is based on customer relations. If we don't have these builders and contractors coming into the county, then we don't have extra tax money for the schools and such. We need to develop a good relationship with local builders," he said.

Ross was one of 21 total applicants for the position and one of three for the final round of interviews in January when the position was initially advertised.

Ross will maintain the same starting salary of \$57,000. The position's salary will be funded through revenue generated by the engineering department.

The position of engineering director was created as part of the department's reorganization effort by the county council after members felt it was not meeting the county's standards for customer service.

Ross will oversee the department's processes and associated personnel, including managing the day-to-day operations and acting as the point of contact for customers and contractors.

Doub, 49, had been a county employee for four months upon his death April 5, after being hospitalized when he collapsed while running April 4.

## Peter Burr House to host bread-baking class

BY ERIK ANDERSON  
Special to The Journal

KEARNEYSVILLE — The Peter Burr Bread Baker's Guild will teach a one-day class on home-baked artisan bread Saturday, April 25, to benefit the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission. Participants will learn the basics of baking five historical types of bread and will take home a live yeast starter kit as well as bread

What: Artisan Bread Class  
When: Saturday, April 25, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Where: Grace Reformed Church, Kearneysville  
Tickets: \$50. Email Wayne Braunstein at wbraun@frontiernet.net to register.

made during class. Longtime Guild member Wayne Braunstein said that for the past decade, his group has sold artisan bread baked in a replica historic wood-burning oven at the 250-year-old Peter Burr House, the oldest wood frame house in

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### IF YOU GO

## Murray Energy blasts W.Va. coal tax for recent layoffs

BY JONATHAN MATTISE  
Associated Press

CHARLESTON — The day after West Virginia Republican lawmakers started tax reform talks, coal giant Murray Energy laid off 214 miners with a clear message calling for lower state taxes to unearth coal.

After last week's layoffs, Murray's subsidiary condemned the Obama administration and lamented cheaper natural gas reserves. What surprised Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin, though, was that Murray blasted the state coal severance tax as "extremely excessive."

"That's really the first time I've had anyone

say anything about our severance tax," said Tomblin, a Democrat.

The tax will be under review as the GOP-led Legislature mulls ways to reshape the tax code, said Senate President Bill Cole, R-Mercer.

During the industry's downturn, the spigot of coal severance cash has slowed considerably. Tomblin expressed concerns about trying to cut an already-shrinking revenue source that helps cover a variety of costs, from education to health care.

A chunk also goes back to county governments. Recently, struggling southern coal counties have laid off law enforcement officers and made other cuts, attributing them to at least partly

to falling severance money.

"One of the things we're blessed with is our energy in West Virginia," Tomblin said. "I can't imagine right now reducing the taxes."

Cole called the tax review "the next step" to help coal, after passing bills last session to trim mining regulations and scrap a state alternative energy standard. Tomblin signed both.

A committee on tax reform is underway, and the next session starts in January.

Robert Murray, the company's namesake and a loud critic of President Obama's energy policies, just last week bet even bigger on coal.

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