

OUTREACH | RESEARCH

at West Virginia State University

Winter 2019

The Future is Bright

*Social Work Department and 4-H partner
on youth mentoring program*

WVSU Cares Day

COMMUNITY ARTS
Alive IN BECKLEY



1891

WEST VIRGINIA STATE
UNIVERSITY

Research & Public Service

a message from the **ADMINISTRATION**



A culture of community outreach is woven into the fabric of campus life here at West Virginia State University. In the pages before you are stories highlighting some of the many ways our faculty, staff and students are dedicating time to uplift the people of West Virginia.

From our annual WVSU Cares Day, which brings hundreds of Yellow Jackets into our communities for a day of giving back, to the outreach conducted by students on a weekly basis, WVSU continually looks for opportunities to meet the people of West Virginia where they are and assist in any way we can.

This publication shares some exciting collaborative efforts between campus units. On the West Side of Charleston, our Extension Service, through its 4-H Youth Development program area, is partnering with the Department of Social Work to ensure that young girls see that their future is full of possibilities.

On campus, our Center for the Advancement of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics is working with students majoring in STEM Education to bring information and activities to home-schooled youths. Out in the community, our American Chemical Society student chapter is bringing hands-on STEM activities to kids in local public schools.

In Raleigh County, we are using public art as a tool for improving communities, while in Kanawha, Cabell and Putnam counties, nutrition education is improving the health of individuals in addiction recovery.

Entrepreneurship education and support is provided in a nine-county region of southern West Virginia through a strategic local partnership, and creative and other entrepreneurs are supported in Charleston at our fully equipped Economic Development Center.

At the heart of these stories of public service are the many faculty, staff and students who passionately dedicate their time to researching and delivering solutions which will improve the lives of West Virginians. We are proud of our community outreach programs and will continue to seek innovative solutions and strategic partnerships to strengthen families and communities in West Virginia.

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CONTENTS

Yellow Jackets Give Back
at Annual WVSU Cares Day 2

WVSU EDC Allows Entrepreneurs
to Work Independently, Not Alone 4

WVSU Brings Science Education
to Home-Schooled Youths 6

Community Arts Alive in Beckley..... 8

The Future is Bright for these Girls 10

West Virginia State University
Program Helping Recovering
Addicts Improve Their Health 12

Logan County Extension Agent
Solving the Puzzle of Sustainable
Economic Development..... 14

WVSU Student Group Gives Back
to Community Through Education
and Outreach 16





Yellow Jackets Give Back

at Annual
WVSU Cares Day

Each spring, the Yellow Jacket nation spreads out across the Kanawha Valley for a day of volunteering called “WVSU Cares Day.” The event, launched in 2013, sees students, faculty, staff and alumni giving back to the community through volunteer work at such sites as non-profits, community centers, animal shelters and other organizations.

“Cares Day is a day for us to come together with student organizations as well as community groups,” said WVSU Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Joey Oden.

The overwhelming need of volunteers in the community is what keeps Cares Day alive every year, Oden said. Among the sites visited include the Kanawha-Charleston Humane Association, the American Red Cross, and Covenant House. Whether it’s building a playground, gardening, serving food or simply spending time at nursing homes, each site has a valuable lesson that a volunteer can learn by getting hands-on experience and making an impact in the community.

Oden points to a local senior citizen living facility as a particularly impactful site for volunteers. “Students always come back with tearful stories,” he said. “The enrichment of having a stranger visit, from playing board games to just having a conversation, is a Cares Day moment that is forever kept in our students’ hearts.”

Each site has a story, Oden said, and WVSU has been adding to the pages. “With the sites being so humble and appreciative of Cares Day, it brings our community together in ways we all hoped it would.”

The seventh annual WVSU Cares Day will take place in April 2019.



WVSU EDC Allows Entrepreneurs to Work Independently, Not Alone

Charleston entrepreneur Gordon Lane Jr. needed a place to work that wasn't his home.

"It can be hard to take a side project seriously if you aren't in a serious environment," said the owner of Advantage Aerial Solutions LLC, which uses drones and different software programs to map large areas of land and inspect infrastructure like cell phone towers, oil and gas rigs.

The serious environment he found was West Virginia State University's Economic Development Center (EDC), a co-working facility, business development center and multimedia production space located on Charleston's West Side.

Lane began using the EDC's co-working space as he worked on his business part-time. The space allows entrepreneurs to "work independently, not alone." It is a national trend of which the EDC was an early adopter, becoming the first such facility in the capital city when it launched.

"We provide people the space to be around other people with the same or similar interests, to bounce ideas off one another, network and develop new projects," said Jaime Rinehart, the EDC's facilities and programs manager.

While the University has operated the EDC since purchasing the building in 2005, it wasn't until a 2012



renovation that the center's focus shifted toward the creative economy. Originally focusing on small business development, administrators eyed funding to create a commercial kitchen in the space's large basement. When the project didn't materialize, the scope was redeveloped into the co-working space and digital production.

In addition to the EDC's open area with computers and workstations, the building provides rentable space for meetings and offices, a voice recording and editing studio, a full production studio with green screen technology, and the cameras and equipment needed for full production.

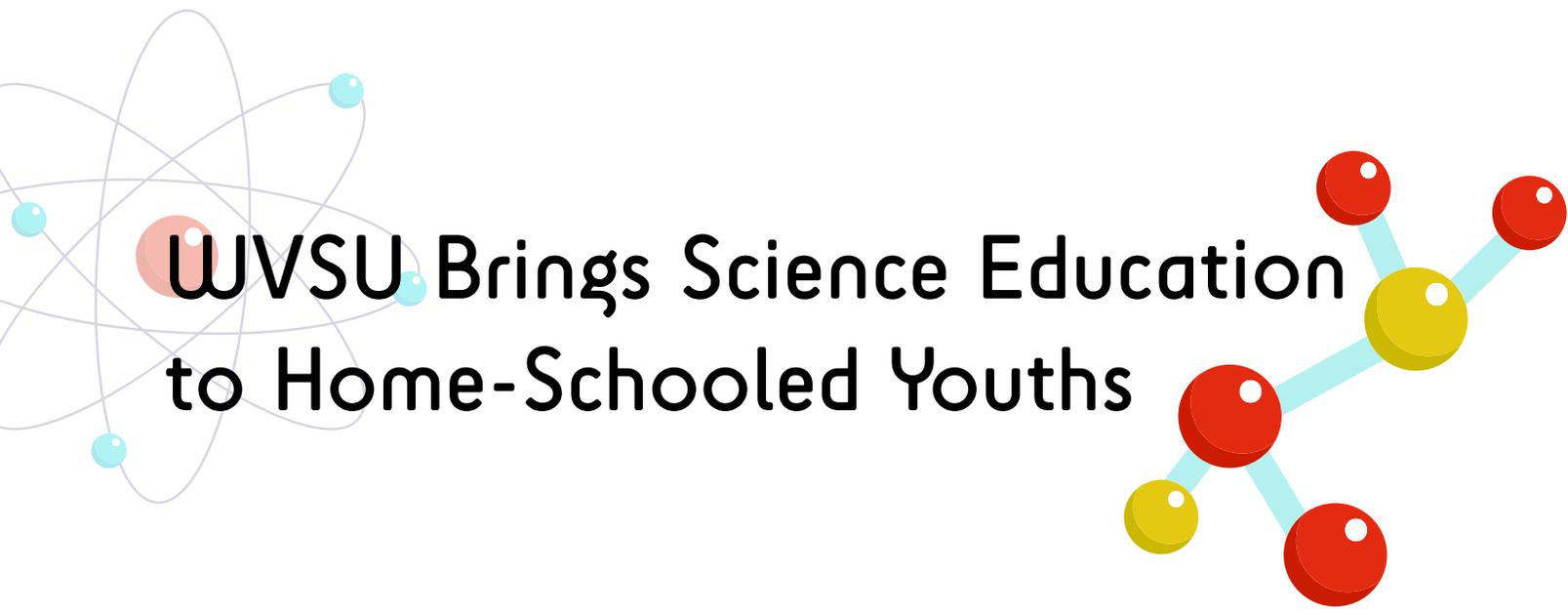
People can use the co-working space free of charge, while other services are on a fee basis. Full membership provides access to things like extended access to the building, a business mailing address, phone service and use of the training and meeting spaces. The EDC typically maintains full occupancy of its long-term office spaces and keeps a waiting list for hopeful tenants.

Once Lane's business began to take off, he eventually moved into one of the office spaces, becoming a full-time tenant operating out of the EDC.

"Besides providing a professional setting to operate, being at the EDC has introduced me to a lot of people who are also creating their own opportunities," he said. "It's led to a lot of partnerships and chances to bounce ideas off of people. It's provided a sense of camaraderie among all the different operations working in the building."

In addition to the leasable spaces and equipment, the facility hosts educational opportunities, such as the popular Creators Program, a workshop series providing instruction and lectures on such topics as music, writing, filmmaking and photography, and will soon launch a full small business development training program for hopeful entrepreneurs.

Learn more at wvsuedc.org.



WVSU Brings Science Education to Home-Schooled Youths

West Virginia State University's 4-H Youth Development division, along with the University's Center for the Advancement of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (CASTEM), is bringing science education to a new target audience: home-schooled kids. Launched in 2017, the initiative is bringing youths from multiple counties to the WVSU campus for hands-on science education.

"We are conducting five-class modules on topics like physics," said Martin Nicolay, a WVSU senior majoring in chemistry education who teaches the classes.

The program is conducted in two-hour sessions, once a week. Ages range from sixth grade through tenth grade and features hands-on activities and instruction on the STEM topic at hand.

"With the instruction level, we aim for the middle," Nicolay said. "It is simple enough that the younger students are engaged while challenging enough that the high school students aren't bored."

The initiative is proving successful, with several students continuing to attend classes each time a new topic is offered. Lessons are taught on campus at WVSU's Aerospace Education Laboratory, equipped with NASA-approved scientific equipment and software.

"Our capacity is 25 per class," said Hannah Payne, assistant program director of 4-H Youth Development and director of CASTEM. "Our last class filled up within a few hours of opening registration. We've got a waiting list of interested kids."

Parents can choose to drop off their students, stay and participate, or spend time in the AEL's space, away from the class.

"Most of our parents either convene in the space amongst themselves or drop off and pick up," Payne said. "With home schooling, parents and children are together all day, so this is providing an opportunity for the kids to be exposed to some other teaching methods."

Payne and her staff survey attendees to determine areas of interest, with the kids' feedback laying the framework for future session topics.

"At the end of each term, we ask the kids what they want to learn about," Payne said, ensuring that lessons are up to state educational codes while still speaking to participant desires. "So our curriculum is definitely developed around both need and interest."





COMMUNITY ARTS

Alive

IN BECKLEY

Downtown Beckley, in Raleigh County, has long prided itself on its historic aesthetic appearance. In 2014, however, the town was in danger of losing its National Register of Historic Places designation by the State Historic Preservation Office due to demolition projects and alterations of historic properties. Preserving the historic integrity of the town, while also nurturing a welcoming atmosphere for new, creative ideas and projects, was imperative for community leaders looking to position Beckley as a business-friendly, vibrant destination for residents and visitors.

WVSU's Raleigh County extension agent, Christine Kinder, began working in collaboration with the Downtown Beckley Business Association (DBBA), a non-profit organization whose mission is to serve local businesses, property owners, the City of Beckley and the community in revitalization of the downtown district through efforts relating to public art, streetscape improvement, design and entrepreneurship. Under the auspices of the DBBA, Kinder has hosted a variety of successful community events, seminars, volunteer activities and public arts projects, as well as received



grant funding to support new initiatives. Mini-grants totaling nearly \$3,000 from Try This West Virginia (the first time the organization funded such projects) have been used in public art initiatives along a rail trail running through downtown, aiming to promote the trail as a bike- and pedestrian-friendly offering.

A fitness-themed mural, bike arch, signage, three bike racks and 15 bike art projects have been installed along the trail. In addition, trellises have been constructed and added to community garden sites. Truly a community effort, all art projects were created, painted and constructed with the assistance of local middle school students, a Boy Scout troop and a kids camp group. A local nonprofit organization donated used bike wheels for the art installation, while the City of Beckley Public Works department provided labor.

Last summer, expanded Try This West Virginia grant funding allowed for the additional painting of a fun “fitness path” onto the trail with colorful flowers, stars, circles and waves encouraging kids to skip, hop, jump

and twirl. With help from a local Boy Scout troop, two beautiful compass designs were painted on the trail. The Public Works department installed two new bike racks downtown, including one at a newly revitalized community center that offers after-school tutoring for students. Newly designed trail banners were also purchased and placed in visible locations along the trail.

The ongoing efforts to improve and bring attention to McManus Trail through beautification have inspired new project ideas and collected additional partners.

With collaborative efforts from new partners including Piney Creek Watershed, plans are underway to develop an art park in a historic area of the McManus Rail Trail. This area of the trail was previously a railroad train depot. WVSU Extension Service, Piney Creek Watershed and the City of Beckley, along with plenty of volunteers, have plans to create a family-friendly atmosphere with colorful, interactive and educational additions. Currently, two murals are in process with design plans for more in spring 2019.



The Future is **BRIGHT** for these Girls

For youths at a community center on the West Side of Charleston, day-to-day life may be anything but typical. For about two hours each week, a youth mentoring program led by WVSU 4-H and the Department of Social Work is providing a sense of normalcy. Those two hours give young girls the opportunity to engage in activities, talk one-on-one about life and school, and receive a meal all in the comfort and safe haven of the Bright Futures program.

Students ranging from middle school to high school have the opportunity to participate in this grant-funded program through WVSU Extension Service. The program focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) activities and includes a mentoring component through the WVSU Department of Social Work. College students majoring in social work make a yearlong commitment to serve as a mentor to the girls.

Working one-on-one with their mentors often proves the biggest reward for the participants, including La'Stacia Williams. The 14-year-old has been in the Bright Futures program for three years. She says the relationships she has made through the program are invaluable.

"The mentors are more than just people who help with the program," she said. "I have become friends with them, trust them, and it is fun to hang out with them. They are serious but at the same time relatable to us."

WVSU Extension Agent Kaysha Jackson, who manages the program, says she sees firsthand the success of the program for the girls and the mentors. "We are building a relationship with underprivileged kids, essentially

becoming role models who help with building their self-esteem, social skills and fostering developmental skills," Jackson said. "Meanwhile, the WVSU students receive community service credit and also extra credit for their classes by dedicating their time and energy to help foster and grow these girls."

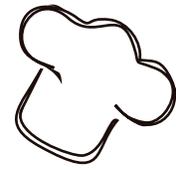
The fully grant-funded program has been in existence for more than eight years. Each week, their activities include enjoying a nice meal, as Jackson said for some of the participants this might be their last meal of the day. The girls also have the opportunity to chat about school and any issues they are facing while also participating in STEM-based activities. This can include coding, utilizing computer kits they put together and then hook up to a computer and proceed to coding and robotics.

It was those interactive STEM activities which helped spark an interest for Williams in a STEM-related career. "I am interested in engineering, because I like hands-on experiences. It is more interesting and intriguing for me," she says. "The Bright Futures Program is fun and educational, and it has helped me realize that women can do things in the STEM field, too."

Jackson says one of the highlights for the girls is visiting the WVSU campus, taking a tour and, of course, visiting the recently erected Katherine Johnson statue. "It is important that the girls get to experience a college campus, see an actual classroom, meet a professor, eat in the cafeteria, see the statue and realize what hard work and good grades could lead them to in the future."

Indeed the future is bright for these girls with the help of this program and the WVSU student mentors.

WEST VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY PROGRAM



HELPING RECOVERING ADDICTS IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH

WVSU Extension Service is helping West Virginians struggling with substance use disorders to make smarter, healthier choices on their road to recovery.

An initiative of the USDA, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) provides instruction on health, nutrition and physical activity but does not traditionally target recovering addicts. With West Virginia being labeled by some as “ground zero for the opioid epidemic,” WVSU is taking a unique approach to help people in need.

“EFNEP wasn’t actually designed to reach this population,” said Tammy Hauldren, a WVSU EFNEP extension associate, “but we have such a need in West Virginia that it only seemed fitting to bring this information to the people we serve.”

While the program traditionally targets low-income families, Hauldren began offering the EFNEP classes at sites such as Recovery Point in Charleston and Huntington to help people in recovery learn the basics of good health and nutrition. Through weekly classes, participants are learning to be more physically active, drink more water and spend wisely at the supermarket.

“Often, our participants know little about grocery shopping and how to spend their money on healthy items in the store, so we cover everything from how to make a list to buying lean protein and making three healthy meals from it,” Hauldren said.

Such information is proving invaluable, as Hauldren has seen firsthand.

“You have given me inspiration and support and some valuable classes in a short time,” said Craig Rhodes, a recent participant in one of Hauldren’s classes. After completing treatment, Rhodes has transitioned into being a full-time caregiver for his two grandchildren. “What I learned from your class has really helped me. I never would’ve dreamed I would be raising these children alone.”

Lessons on health-conscious spending, proper nutrition and serving sizes are supplemented with physical activity to get participants moving.

“In Huntington, for instance, we’ll go to Ritter Park and walk or jog three to four miles,” Hauldren said. “Many

participants smoke and drink lots of soda, so while I’m with them, there is none of that. One of the first things I cover is the benefit of replacing sugary sodas and energy drinks with water.”

Another first, she said, is building trust. While EFNEP requires six lessons for each course, Hauldren has expanded that to 10 to help establish and nurture a relationship with participants.

“You have to build a relationship and let participants know you’re there to help, to sow seeds of hope as they move through their recovery process,” she said. “So those first couple of lessons, especially, are about building trust as we ease into the core of the program.”

The approach is paying off, as Hauldren has seen participants learn and benefit from making healthy choices by the end of her time with them.

“I had one man say to me, ‘Ms. Tammy, I’ve been shooting up heroin for 16 years. Why should I care about what I’m going to eat now?’” she said. “What I try to impart onto them is that what you eat has everything to do with your recovery.”

Hauldren is thankful, she said, because the need for programming like EFNEP is so great in West Virginia. The state has one of the nation’s highest rates of deaths from drug overdoses. As people move into recovery from addiction, understanding how nutrition and physical activity play a role in that process is vital.

Hauldren maintains a growing waiting list of organizations wanting EFNEP. In addition to Recovery Point Charleston and Huntington, she has brought EFNEP to such sites as St. Francis Hospital’s Beacon program, Putnam County Drug Court and the Pregnancy Connections program at Thomas Memorial Hospital.

Developed by the USDA in 1969, EFNEP has successfully addressed critical societal concerns by employing paraprofessional staff and influencing nutrition and physical activity behaviors of low-income families, particularly those with young children. Through a community-based, relationship-driven, hands-on educational approach, EFNEP has directly impacted economic obesity and food insecurity challenges that hinder the health and wellbeing of the nation.



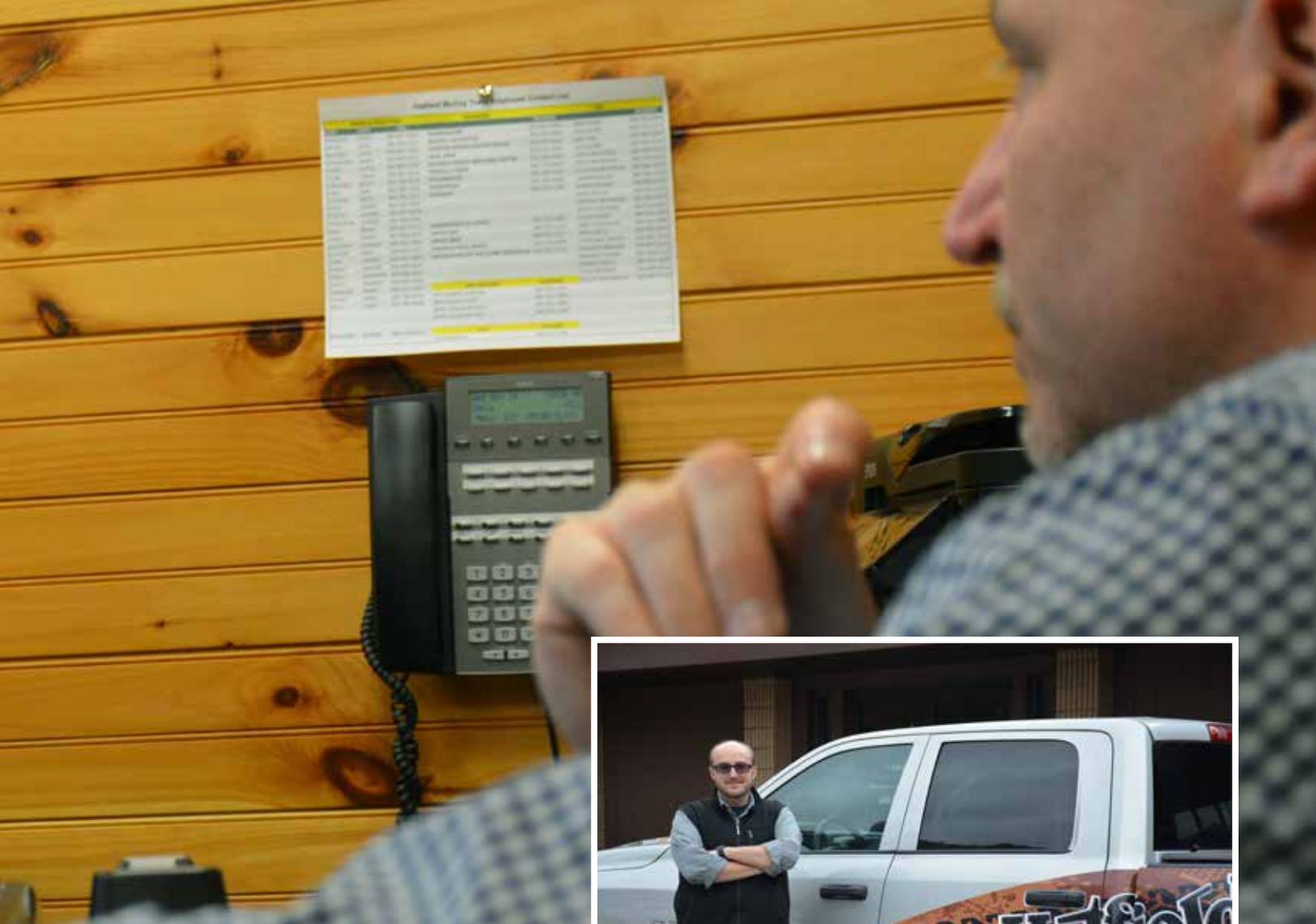


Logan County Extension Agent **Solving the Puzzle** of Sustainable Economic Development

With nine southern West Virginia counties to support with community and economic development opportunities, there is no such thing as a typical day for WVSU Extension Agent Chris Zeto. Based in Logan County, Zeto works to foster business development along the ever-growing Hatfield and McCoy Trail System, one of the largest off-highway trail systems in the world, featuring over 600 miles of trail throughout multiple counties.

“I have more than 130 businesses I work with on a regular basis,” Zeto said. “So some days I’ll be in the office working on paperwork, but a lot of the time I’m in the community, talking to people and helping our businesses.”

Zeto facilitates meetings, develops projects and coordinates training sessions to help the businesses along the trail system not only successfully launch but to be sustainable long-term, noting that while many of



the businesses he supports are related to tourism, it isn't a requirement. He's helped everyone from lodge owners opening along trailheads to restaurants and print shops.

Being able to provide needed educational opportunities has proved especially rewarding for Zeto.

"The partnership between WVSU and the Hatfield and McCoy Trail System is great because of how they complement one another," said Zeto, whose position is shared between WVSU and the Trail System. "Education is important for business owners, and we are able to strengthen that through the opportunities we provide."

Courses have covered topics such as branding, social media, website design, search engine optimization, financial management and others. Zeto works alongside other businesses in the region with similar development missions in order to maximize efforts without duplicating.

"My role as an extension agent is to work one-on-one with business owners, determine their needs, and either provide that resource or link them to others who can. A lot of it is communication and networking — putting the puzzle pieces together to make a bigger picture of sustainable economic development for the region."

While his office is located at the Trail System's Logan County headquarters, Zeto's coverage area extends to Boone, Kanawha, Lincoln, Mercer, McDowell, Mingo, Wayne and Wyoming counties.

In 2019, Zeto will begin conducting a new needs assessment to ensure his efforts are meeting the needs of the people he serves, ensuring that the small business community in southern West Virginia only continues to grow.





WVSU Student Group *Gives Back to Community* Through Education and Outreach

West Virginia State University's student chapter of the American Chemical Society (ACS), the most active science-based student organization on campus, has found a variety of ways to serve the community through an award-winning portfolio of education and outreach efforts.

"The students wanted a chance to go out into the community and share their love of science with those around them," said Dr. Micheal Fultz, chair of the WVSU chemistry department and faculty advisor for the ACS chapter.

ACS students visit schools, youth organizations and after-school programs throughout the region to deliver hands-on demonstrations in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

"Whether it's the Boy Scouts or an after-school program, science is all around us, and these students don't mind spreading their love for science around," Fultz said.

"ACS has given me more chances to have better connections with people in my field and grow professionally," said Fatima Irfan, current president of the WVSU ACS student chapter.

Fultz reactivated WVSU's ACS group in 2009 and encouraged students to become more involved. That involvement has led to a number of accolades at the national level, including a series of Outstanding Chapter awards for community outreach efforts.

In addition to teaching STEM to elementary and middle school youths, among those efforts have been hosting speakers and seminars on campus and volunteering in the community, including an award-winning effort to help high schools affected by the 2016 floods.

The chapter recently worked with WVSU Alumni Affairs to raise money for a new endowed scholarship for students studying the sciences. The David Scott Thaxton Memorial Scholarship, named in honor of a WVSU graduate who was killed in a car accident in 2017, has received gifts of more than \$30,000 to endow the scholarship. Thaxton graduated from WVSU in 2013 with a bachelor's degree in biology and was an active student member of ACS.

ACS also hosts an annual youth science bowl, which has brought as many as 11 high schools and over 100 students to WVSU.



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