

WVDN JUN 23, 2021



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Did You Know?

By The West Virginian | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

The full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business sector won't be known for years to come, though a recent survey indicates that a drop in post-pandemic productivity is not something many businesses expect. In a 2020 survey of leading firms in Europe that were asked a variety of questions about the potential long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, the European Central Bank found that 60 percent of respondents felt that productivity in their business or sector would increase. In addition, the ECB reported that most respondents were not anticipating any long-term, pandemic-related negative effects on sales. The ECB theorizes that the rosy outlook in terms of productivity reflects how so many businesses were able to successfully adapt on the fly at the onset of the pandemic, proving they were capable of maintaining existing levels of production despite sudden restrictions on labor that resulted from social distancing measures, such as the necessary transition from in person labor to remote working.

July 4th Facts

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

July 4th is a day when Americans celebrate their independence, but it's also a day to commemorate two men who played vital roles in procuring that independence. Both John Adams, the second President of the United States, and his successor Thomas Jefferson passed away on July 4, 1826. The two men had an interesting relationship that became increasingly complex as the nation they helped to found developed.

According to History.com, Adams and Jefferson were confidantes in the 1780s. But as time wore on, each man developed a different view of what the United States government should be, creating a rift in their relationship that was only widened by the 1800 presidential election. The men ran against each other in that election, which is still considered one of the more contentious elections in American history.

Jefferson ultimately claimed victory, a result so unnerving to Adams that he left Washington, D.C. prior to Jefferson's inauguration.

The two men would ultimately reconcile, exchanging more than 150 letters before dying within hours of one another on Independence Day in 1826.

Morrissey Applauds Sentencing In Voter Fraud Case

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrissey applauded the sentencing of a mail carrier convicted in

connection with the manipulation of absentee voter requests.

Thomas Cooper, 48, of Dry Fork, received a sentence of five years probation with six months of the term to be served on home confinement. He had pleaded guilty last July to single counts of injury to the mail and attempt to defraud the residents of West Virginia of a fair election.

An investigator for the Attorney General gathered evidence for the case on behalf of the Secretary of State's Office.

"This conviction and sentencing should serve as a strong warning to anyone else who feels tempted to commit election fraud," Attorney General Morrissey said. "As we have stressed in the past, our team remains committed to protecting the integrity of elections in West Virginia. We will use every means provided by the law to do so."

An affidavit filed in late May 2020 stated Cooper fraudulently altered eight absentee ballot requests in Pendleton County, of which the complaint stated he fraudulently changed the party affiliation on five from Democrat to Republican.

The affidavit that accompanied the criminal complaint stated Cooper accessed the ballot requests through his employment as a rural mail carrier. He was responsible for mail delivery in the three towns from which the tampered requests were mailed – Onego, Riverton and Franklin.

According to the affidavit, Cooper admitted to altering some of the requests.

The alterations were caught by an elections official in the Pendleton County Courthouse and reported to the state's Election Fraud Task Force.

The West Virginia Attorney General's Office, West Virginia Secretary of State's Office and the U.S. Postal Service Office of the Inspector General investigated. Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Warner prosecuted the case. U.S. District Judge Thomas S. Kleeh presided.

Read a copy of the criminal complaint at <https://bit.ly/2X0GliO> and affidavit at <https://bit.ly/2X3P7Cc>.

West Virginia lawmakers to review \$250M in special session

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — West Virginia lawmakers will convene Thursday to take up \$250 million in spending proposed by Gov. Jim Justice.

The spending comes after a "tremendous" budget surplus, the Republican governor said last week. He has proposed moving the millions to a wide variety of state departments, from tourism to natural resources. There are proposed upgrades to correctional facilities and expansions to some West Virginia State Parks.

The legislature will meet at noon to act on the funds.

Earlier in June, the legislature met to pour federal funds and extra state cash into road repairs, health care and education programs such as school lunches. It included about \$902 million in federal funds received through

President Joe Biden's American Rescue Plan.

Much of those funds were grants directed by the federal government to be spent on programs such as substance abuse prevention and aid for needy families and for child care services.

Another \$150 million from a state budget surplus was dedicated to fund 702 miles (1,130 kilometers) of road paving and projects on 40 bridges across all 55 counties.

Outdoors festival planned in September in southern WVa

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

GLEN JEAN, W.Va. (AP) — The permanent home of the National Scout Jamboree will hold a four-day outdoor festival for the public in September.

The Adventure On! Freedom Festival will take place Sept. 10 to 13 at the 14,000-acre Summit Bechtel Reserve in southern West Virginia, WVVA-TV reported.

Among the events will be a free concert featuring the band Lonestar on Sept. 11 for first responders, active duty or retired military and law enforcement officers on the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The event also will feature motorbike and electric bike racing, swimming, hiking, fishing, skateboarding, target shooting, camping and ziplines.

Local vendors also will be allowed to sell their wares.

Tickets can be purchased in advance.

Mooove!: Cows block train tracks in West Virginia

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

BLUEFIELD, W.Va. (AP) — Trains had to be stopped along a stretch in southern West Virginia as authorities tried to coax three cows off of railroad tracks.

The cows appeared on the tracks in the city of Bluefield on Monday evening, the Bluefield Daily Telegraph reported.

Witness Angie Sharp said the cows came from a wooded area and made their way down a street into downtown Bluefield.

Bluefield police used a livestock trailer to try to corral the cows. The cows broke away at one point before being herded back toward the trailer. Onlookers snapped photos and videos of the cows from across the tracks near Bluefield State College.

Officers finally caught the cows after darkness fell, the newspaper reported.

Mercer County dispatchers said Norfolk Southern halted train traffic in the area while the chase was on.

Humana picked to continue Medicare service for West Virginia

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — West Virginia has picked Humana Inc. to continue providing health insurance for the 54,000 retirees eligible for Medicare and their dependents in the state.

The state's public employees' insurance agency awarded the health provider a new, four-year contract last week.

"We value the relationship we have built with the Humana team over the past 11 years," the head of the agency, Ted Cheatham, said in a statement. "The personal approach that Humana brings will allow us to ensure the health and well-being of our retirees for years to come."

Humana has served the state since 2010, when it was first picked to provide health insurance to the state's retirees, according to a company news release.

The company has a variety of health plans that include more than 170,000 people in the state.

Funding Announced To Support Women's Recovery Opportunities

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

U.S. Sens. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) and Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, today announced \$300,000 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for Recovery Point of Huntington. Specifically, the funding will support a grant project titled "The Point: Providing Opportunity for Women's Recovery (POWR)."

"I have repeatedly said that the city of Huntington should serve as model for other cities across America grappling with substance use. Recovery Point of Huntington is a significant part of the community's efforts to help save lives and curb addiction. I'm glad to see this funding heading their way to specifically help women recover from the grip of addiction. I will continue to do all that I can to drive resources into our state to support programs and facilities like Recovery Point that are part of the spectrum of solutions needed to combat the opioid epidemic that is harming too many West Virginians," Sen. Capito said.

"Every West Virginian understands the toll the drug epidemic has taken on our family, friends and community. Recovery Point West Virginia continues to provide support and treatment for West Virginians struggling with substance use disorder. I am pleased HHS is investing in the Providing Opportunity for Women's Recovery Program at Recovery Point in Huntington to support women during their recovery process and help them get back on their feet. I will continue fighting for funding to combat the drug epidemic in West Virginia and support all West Virginians during their time of need," Sen. Manchin said.

Watchdog: Nursing home deaths up 32% in 2020 amid pandemic

By Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar Associated Press | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

WASHINGTON (AP) — Deaths among Medicare patients in nursing homes soared by 32% last year, with two devastating spikes eight months apart, a government watchdog reported Tuesday in the most comprehensive look yet at the ravages of COVID-19 among its most vulnerable victims.

The report from the inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services found that about 4 in 10 Medicare recipients in nursing homes had or likely had COVID-19 in 2020, and that deaths overall jumped by 169,291 from the previous year, before the coronavirus appeared.

“We knew this was going to be bad, but I don’t think even those of us who work in this area thought it was going to be this bad,” said Harvard health policy professor David Grabowski, a nationally recognized expert on long-term care, who reviewed the report for The Associated Press.

“This was not individuals who were going to die anyway,” Grabowski added. “We are talking about a really big number of excess deaths.”

Investigators used a generally accepted method of estimating “excess” deaths in a group of people after a calamitous event. It did not involve examining individual death certificates of Medicare patients but comparing overall deaths among those in nursing homes to levels recorded the previous year. The technique was used to estimate deaths in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria in 2017 and in New York City after the first coronavirus surge last spring. It does not attribute a cause of death but is seen as a barometer of impact.

Death rates were higher in every month last year when compared with 2019. The report documented two spikes with particular implications for government policy and for protecting the most vulnerable in future outbreaks of life-threatening illnesses. In April of last year, a total of 81,484 Medicare patients in nursing homes died. Then eight months later, after lockdowns and frantic efforts to expand testing — but before vaccines became widely available — nursing home patients accounted for a staggering 74,299 deaths in December.

“This is happening long after it was clear that nursing homes were particularly vulnerable,” said Nancy Harrison, a deputy regional inspector general who worked on the report. “We really have to look at that. Why did they remain so vulnerable?” Federal investigators are still drilling down to try to document the chain of causes and effects.

Tuesday’s report was the most comprehensive yet from the government because it included statistics for the early part of last year, during the initial coronavirus surge. Medicare did not require nursing homes to report COVID-19 cases and deaths occurring before May 8, more than four months into the pandemic year.

In another new finding, the report showed that cases and deaths among Asian American patients tracked with the more severe impacts seen among Blacks and Latinos. Indeed, Asian Medicare enrollees in nursing homes saw the highest increase in death rates, with 27% dying in 2020 compared to 17% the previous year. For whites, the death rate grew to 24% in 2020 from 18% in 2019, a significant increase but not as pronounced. Death rates for Hispanic and Black patients were 23% last year, up from 15% in 2019.

The inspector general’s office based its analysis on Medicare billing data. It also included patients in Medicare Advantage plans sold by private insurers. Although Medicare does not cover long-term care, the vast majority of nursing home patients are elderly, and Medicare does cover their medical needs. The report included both patients who live in nursing homes as well as those temporarily at a facility for rehabilitation.

Health economist Tamara Konetzka of the University of Chicago, who also reviewed the report for AP, said building an estimate from individual death certificates would have faced another set of challenges. Especially in the first wave of the pandemic, many who died would not necessarily have been tested for COVID-19, for example.

“By looking at excess deaths you can get away from some of the measurement issues and say how much worse things were in 2020 than in 2019,” explained Konetzka, who has testified before Congress on the impact of COVID-19 in nursing homes.

The inspector general’s findings about Asians highlight a riddle for researchers, said Konetzka. The reasons for higher cases and deaths among Blacks, Hispanics and Asians may not necessarily be tied to race and ethnicity. Instead, minority patients may be clustered in homes located in communities with more severe outbreaks.

The report also found that low-income nursing home patients covered by Medicare and Medicaid together were much more likely to have gotten COVID-19. The infection rate for that group reached 56%, and 26% died.

Some states suffered worse impacts. By the end of December more than half of the Medicare patients in nursing homes in Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana and New Jersey had or likely had COVID-19.

Across the U.S., the coronavirus found ideal conditions to spread among frail nursing home patients living in close quarters. Many researchers believe it’s likely staffers unwittingly brought the virus in from surrounding communities.

Although facilities locked down in March of last year, government efforts to help were haphazard. The industry complained of chronic shortages of protective gear, including basics like masks and gowns.

The Trump administration initially delegated responsibility for testing to states before belatedly marshaling more federal resources. HHS later laid the groundwork for vaccinations under the Trump administration, and the Biden administration followed through. As vaccination rates rose, nursing home cases plummeted, allowing facilities to again permit family visits.

The country can’t move on yet, said deputy inspector general Harrison. “Hopefully, COVID will go away,” she said. “But once that happens, there will always be infectious diseases, and we all need to ask ourselves what we can do to protect vulnerable nursing home residents going forward.”

EU investigates Google's conduct in digital ad tech sector

By kelvin chan ap business writer | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

LONDON (AP) — European Union regulators have launched a fresh antitrust investigation of Google, this time over whether the U.S. tech giant is stifling competition in digital advertising technology.

The European Commission said Tuesday that it has opened a formal investigation into whether Google violated the bloc’s competition rules by favoring its own online display advertising technology services at the expense of rival publishers, advertisers and advertising technology services.

The investigation underscores European concerns about Google’s dominance in the online advertising industry and whether it’s exploiting its data advantage to cement its position in the display ad market, which the EU estimates is worth 20 billion euros (\$24 billion) annually.

Online display ads are the banners and text that show up on websites such as newspaper home pages and are personalized based on an internet user’s browsing history. Search ads, in contrast, appear alongside search engine results and are based on keywords that users are looking for.

The commission, the EU’s executive arm and the bloc’s top antitrust enforcer, is looking in particular at whether Google is distorting competition by restricting access by third parties to user data for ad purposes on websites and apps.

Google said competition in online ads has made them more affordable and relevant, cut fees and expanded

options for publishers and advertisers.

“Thousands of European businesses use our advertising products to reach new customers and fund their websites every single day,” Google said in a prepared statement. “They choose them because they’re competitive and effective. We will continue to engage constructively with the European Commission to answer their questions and demonstrate the benefits of our products to European businesses and consumers.”

The investigation signals a renewed effort by Margrethe Vestager, the EU commission’s competition chief and executive vice president for digital, to rein in Google’s market power. She has already slapped Google with a total of 8.2 billion euros (now \$9.7 billion) worth of fines in three separate antitrust cases. There was criticism, however, that the investigations took too long and the fines were not much of a deterrent because the company could easily afford them.

“Online advertising services are at the heart of how Google and publishers monetize their online services,” Vestager said. Google collects data to be used for targeted advertising while it also sells advertising space and acts as a middleman between online advertisers and publishers, she said.

“We are concerned that Google has made it harder for rival online advertising services to compete in the so-called ad tech stack,” Vestager said.

The EU Commission said it was investigating the ways Google uses technology to broker display ad sales between online advertisers and publishers.

For one, officials are examining requirements to use Google’s in-house ad purchasing platforms to buy display ads on YouTube while rival services are potentially restricted in the way they can serve ads on the video-sharing site. They’re also scrutinizing whether Google’s various ad platforms favor each other.

Another area the commission is looking at are restrictions Google puts on advertisers, publishers and competing ad brokers to access data about the identity and behavior of users that Google’s own ad services have access to. Such data can be used to tailor online ads to individual web users.

Also under the microscope are Google’s plans to phase out third-party browser “cookies” on Chrome and ad identifier tags on Android devices for users opting out of personalized advertising, as part of the company’s plan to beef up privacy measures. The commission is looking into how these plans will affect digital ad markets.

EU regulators have the power to impose penalties worth up to 10% of a company’s annual revenue. But it’s a small price to pay for wealthy tech companies like Google, which posted a \$17.9 billion profit in its latest quarter, and the commission is turning to other methods beyond headline-grabbing fines.

Vestager has started using “interim measures” as a speedy way to halt anti-competitive behavior while investigations are carried out. She also has a lead role in updating the EU’s digital rulebook with measures aimed at reining in the tech giants and preventing them from cornering digital markets in the first place.

How Big Tech created a data 'treasure trove' for police

By matt obrien and michael liedtke ap technology writers | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — When U.S. law enforcement officials need to cast a wide net for information, they’re increasingly turning to the vast digital ponds of personal data created by Big Tech companies via the devices and online services that have hooked billions of people around the world.

Data compiled by four of the biggest tech companies shows that law enforcement requests for user information — phone calls, emails, texts, photos, shopping histories, driving routes and more — have more than tripled in the U.S. since 2015. Police are also increasingly savvy about covering their tracks so as not to

alert suspects of their interest.

That's the backdrop for recent revelations that the Trump-era U.S. Justice Department sought data from Apple, Microsoft and Google about members of Congress, their aides and news reporters in leak investigations — then pursued court orders that blocked those companies from informing their targets.

In just the first half of 2020 — the most recent data available — Apple, Google, Facebook and Microsoft together fielded more than 112,000 data requests from local, state and federal officials. The companies agreed to hand over some data in 85% of those cases. Facebook, including its Instagram service, accounted for the largest number of disclosures.

Consider Newport, Rhode Island, a coastal city of 24,000 residents that attracts a flood of summer tourists. Fewer than 100 officers patrol the city — but they make multiple requests a week for online data from tech companies.

That's because most crimes — from larceny and financial scams to a recent fatal house party stabbing at a vacation rental booked online — can be at least partly traced on the internet. Tech providers, especially social media platforms, offer a "treasure trove of information" that can help solve them, said Lt. Robert Salter, a supervising police detective in Newport.

"Everything happens on Facebook," Salter said. "The amount of information you can get from people's conversations online — it's insane."

As ordinary people have become increasingly dependent on Big Tech services to help manage their lives, American law enforcement officials have grown far more savvy about technology than they were five or six years ago, said Cindy Cohn, executive director of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a digital rights group. That's created what Cohn calls "the golden age of government surveillance." Not only has it become far easier for police to trace the online trails left by suspects, they can also frequently hide their requests by obtaining gag orders from judges and magistrates. Those orders block Big Tech companies from notifying the target of a subpoena or warrant of law enforcement's interest in their information — contrary to the companies' stated policies.

Of course, there's often a reason for such secrecy, said Andrew Pak, a former federal prosecutor. It helps prevent investigations getting sidetracked because someone learns about it, he said — "the target, perhaps, or someone close to it."

Longstanding opposition to such gag orders has recently resurfaced in the wake of the Trump-era orders. Apple in 2018 shared phone and account data generated by two Democratic members of the House Intelligence Committee, but the politicians didn't find out until May, once a series of gag orders expired. Microsoft also shared data about a congressional aide and had to wait more than two years before telling that person. Brad Smith, Microsoft's president, last week called for an end to the overuse of secret gag orders, arguing in a Washington Post opinion piece that "prosecutors too often are exploiting technology to abuse our fundamental freedoms."

Critics like Cohn have called for revision of U.S. surveillance laws drawn up years ago when the police and prosecutors typically had to deliver warrants to the home of the person being targeted for searches. Now that most personal information is kept in the equivalent of vast digital storehouses controlled by Big Tech companies, such searches can proceed in secret.

"Our surveillance laws are really based on the idea that if something is really important, we store it at home, and that doesn't pass the giggle test these days," Cohn said. "It's just not true."

Many tech companies are quick to point out that the majority of the information they are forced to share is considered "non-content" data. But that can include useful details such as the basic personal details you supply when you register for an account, or the metadata that shows if and when you called or messaged someone, though not what you said to them.

Law enforcement can also ask tech companies to preserve any data generated by a particular user, which prevents the target from deleting it. Doing so doesn't require a search warrant or any judicial oversight, said Armin Tadayon, a cybersecurity associate at the advisory firm the Brunswick Group.

If police later find reasonable grounds for conducting a search, they can return with a warrant and seize the preserved data. If not, the provider deletes the copies and "the user likely never finds out," Tadayon said.

In Newport, getting a search warrant for richer online data isn't that difficult. Salter said it requires a quick trip to a nearby courthouse to seek a judge's approval; some judges are also available after hours for emergency requests. And if a judge finds there is probable cause to search through online data, tech companies almost always comply.

"Most of the companies do play ball," Salter said. "We can speak with people, get questions answered. They're usually pretty helpful."

Nearly all big tech companies — from Amazon to rental sites like Airbnb, ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft and service providers like Verizon — now have teams to respond to such requests and regularly publish reports about how much they disclosed. Many say they work to narrow overly broad requests and reject those that aren't legally valid.

Some of the most dramatic increases in requests have been to tech companies that cater to younger people. As the messaging app Snapchat has grown in popularity, so have government requests for its data. Snap, the company behind the app, fielded nearly 17,000 data requests in the first six months of 2020, compared to 762 in the same period of 2015.

Salter said the fact that we're all doing so much online means police detectives need to stay tech-savvy. But training courses for how to file such requests aren't hard to find.

For those worried about the growing volume of online data sought by law enforcement, Salter said: "Don't commit crimes and don't use your computer and phones to do it."

"Judges are not going to sign off on something if we don't have probable cause to go forward," he said. "We're not going to look at people's information without having something to go on."

But Cohn said more tech companies should be using encryption technology to make all personal information, including metadata, virtually impossible to decipher without a user key to unlock it.

Until then, she said, police can short circuit constitutional protections against unreasonable searches "by just going to the company instead of coming directly to us."

Liedtke reported from San Ramon, California.

WVDA To Conduct Aerial Black Fly Treatment

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 23, 2021



The West Virginia Department of Agriculture will be conducting aerial treatments for biological suppression of black flies on the New, Bluestone, and Greenbrier Rivers on Wednesday, June 23, weather and water levels permitting. Potentially, the treatments may continue into Thursday, June 24.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture Black Fly Control Program has the responsibility of significantly reducing the black fly population in southeastern West Virginia without adversely affecting non-target aquatic organisms within the area of treatment. This is accomplished by monitoring black fly larval development in certain southern West Virginia river systems for the purpose of determining the optimum time to conduct black fly control operations. Suppression activities target problem areas of the New, Bluestone and Greenbrier Rivers.

Town of Alderson Looking for Next Cover Photo

By Rebecca Stalnaker | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

The town of Alderson Mayor, Travis Copenhaver, posted a request on the town's social media on Sunday, June 20 calling out to all local photographers. According to the post, he is looking for a new cover photo for the town's Facebook page.

Mayor Copenhaver is challenging photographers to capture the beauty of Alderson, also known as "The Gem

of the Hills.” He stated, “Over the next few days please drop your favorite photo here showcasing our town’s beautiful photo opportunities for me to select one to showcase.”

Photograph submissions must be posted in the comments section of the original Facebook post on the Town of Alderson, West Virginia page. The winner will be chosen based on the amount of “likes” the photo receives.

The post noted that it would make it easier if each photo was edited to include the photographer’s name before posting.

Another note included in the post reminds photographers to ensure they have permission when photographing people. It goes on to say that the town lions have already given permission to be photographed as much as anyone likes.

Overall, the message contained in the post is to have fun and capture the local beauty to be immortalized in photographic form. Also, residents are encouraged to vote on their favorite photos by “liking” them.

2021 West Virginia Maple Syrup Production Numbers Released

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

West Virginia Maple Syrup Price by Type of Sale and Size of Container – 2019 and 2020

	Gallon		½ Gallon		Quart		Pint		½ Pint	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
	(Dollars)									
<i>Retail</i>	43.00	50.00	28.20	30.40	15.30	16.80	11.10	10.00	6.20	8.00
<i>Wholesale</i>	45.80	42.90	22.00	22.10	12.30	13.10	7.20	7.70	4.60	4.60

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – For the 2021 season, West Virginia produced a totaled 13,000 gallons of maple syrup, down 3,000 gallons from the previous year. Yield per tap correlated with the overall decrease in production as taps on average produced 0.169 gallon, down from the 2020 yield of 0.213 gallon per tap. Despite production levels falling, the total number of taps increased by 2,000 for a total of 77,000 taps. On average, the maple syrup season opened on February 13, 2021 and closed on March 16 for an average season length of 31 days. The first date sap was collected in West Virginia was on January 12, 2021 with the last date for sap collection on April 6.

“Weather remains a key factor for how successful our maple seasons end up. If it is too warm, it can severely hinder the sap’s flow resulting in lower production levels,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt. “An optimistic note is we continue to see more taps placed in trees which will only lead to positive results for the industry.”

The average price per gallon for sales in 2020 was \$30.20, a 27 percent decrease. Bulk prices for 2020 were \$1.90 per pound, down from \$2.10 per pound from the previous year. Although, bulk price per gallon increased by \$1 to \$21.00. Bulk sales dominated the market with 83 percent of sales followed by retail sales at 11 percent and wholesale at 6 percent.

Maple syrup production in the United States saw a decrease of 17 percent for a total of 3.42 million gallons. The number of taps totaled 13.3 million, up 2 percent from 2020. Yield per tap was 0.257 gallon, down 0.057 gallon from the previous season. On average, the United States maple season lasted 27 days, compared with 34 days in 2020. The total value of the U.S. maple production came in at \$132 million for 2020.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials who sits on the Board of Public Works.

Library Dedication Ceremony Will Honor Anne Smith

By jaine schmidt wyatt | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

The Alderson Public Library Board of Trustees and Friends of the Library invite everyone to a dedication ceremony on Saturday, June 26, at 1 p.m. to remember and recognize Anne Smith.

During her lifetime, Ms. Smith was a tremendous supporter, friend and mentor at the library, she served on the board of trustees and was president of the board for many years. She actively participated in all aspects of the library for over 40 years.

Come join in to celebrate Anne and all she did for the Alderson Library.

The Friends of the Library will serve light refreshments following the dedication ceremony.

Funding Announced For Youth Substance Use Prevention

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

U.S. Sens. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) and Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, today announced the Mercer County Coalition for Healthy Communities' eligibility to receive up to \$125,000 through the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Program. This funding is made available through the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and will help establish collaboration among communities to prevent and reduce substance use among young people.

"I have often said that community-based solutions are among the most effective in our continued battle against the opioid and addiction crisis. No two places are the same, and our approach towards substance use prevention needs to reflect the individual people in specific areas. The Drug-Free Communities program provides support to coalitions on the ground and helps provide the focused approach to substance use prevention that the youth of our state need. I will continue to use my role on the Senate Appropriations Committee to advocate for resources like these as we continue to battle the challenges created by the

addiction crisis,” Sen. Capito said.

“The Drug-Free Communities Support Program plays a critical role in combatting and preventing drug misuse among West Virginia youth and across the country. Every West Virginian knows all too well the impacts of the drug epidemic on our communities, friends, family and loved ones. I am pleased this funding will be invested in Community Connections in Mercer County for the Drug-Free Communities Support Program. I will continue to advocate for support in West Virginia’s fight against the drug epidemic in every way possible,” Sen. Manchin said.

DSLCC Votes To Change Name

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

Following a unanimous vote by the Local Board on June 21, Dabney S. Lancaster Community College (DSLCC) will no longer use the name of the former Superintendent of Public Instruction for Virginia, following the recent discovery of new information regarding Dr. Lancaster’s history.

During its regularly scheduled meeting on June 21, the DSLCC Local Board unanimously voted to recommend the renaming of the community college to the state system. The State Board will meet on July 21, 2021, to accept the Local Board’s recommendation. The college will use its tagline “We are more than a community college, we are the Community’s College” in lieu of the former DSLCC name, where appropriate.

The college will follow a guided and diligent process to rename the college, which could entail community surveys, faculty and staff input and feedback from students as well. It will be the top priority of the college to navigate through this process as efficiently and effectively as possible to ensure that the new name of the college follows the state board guidelines:

The new policy on college naming states that institutions’ names “should reflect the values of inclusive and accessible education articulated in the VCCS mission statement, with special emphasis on diversity, equity, and opportunity, and be relevant to the students it seeks to serve and to the geography of its service region.”

Dr. John Rainone, DSLCC’s president and secretary of the Local Board, said the college has already initiated the process of putting together a task force of people from the college and from the community to recommend a new name. It is currently unclear what the cost to the college will be and if the state will assist with paying for the effort.

“There is an opportunity to build a new community college moving forward for the next 60 years,” said Dr. Rainone.

In July 2020, Virginia’s State Board for Community Colleges passed a resolution recommending that the local boards review the appropriateness of the names of their colleges, campuses, and facilities and to report their findings and recommendations by no later than June 2021. Initially, DSLCC rejected the recommendation, but in light of new information, DSLCC’s Local Board reconsidered.

The board held a discussion about the name change and invited public comment as well. Following a brief discussion from the Local Board, it unanimously agreed that it would no longer use Dr. Lancaster’s name.

“His contributions to our public schooling were many, but we cannot deny that he was in favor of segregation

in schools or this new information.” said board member Marylin Alexander.

Rev. William Hartsfield said he would vote in favor of the name change due to the State Board making a second recommendation to the college to change its name and enacting a policy that college name should be that encourages diversity, equity and inclusion.

“I understand that we have control of the names of buildings, it’s up to the state to change the name of the college” said board member Rev. Hartsfield.

The college will be celebrating its 60th anniversary this summer, giving the college the opportunity to honor its past while pushing for a brighter future that is in line with the current institutional and state goals, said Dr. Rainone.

College officials expect to have the new name selected by October 2021, with the goal of presenting to the state board for approval in November.

For more information about the decision to rename the college, visit dslcc.edu/renaming.

Greenbrier Valley Pride hosts first LGBTQIA+ pride parade and block party

By Bobby Bordelon | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

Greenbrier Valley Pride is an up-and-coming group dedicated to inclusivity and the celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community throughout the region. The organization is currently fundraising and planning for the inaugural Greenbrier Valley Pride event to be held on June 26, 2021.

Festivities will begin with a parade in downtown Lewisburg. Line up will begin on Lee Street at 2 PM. From there, people will start walking, marching, parading, and celebrating down Washington Street at 3 PM.

The parade will come to a close in front of the Greenbrier County Courthouse and Blue Skies Ahead headquarters on Court Street. This is not the end of the event however – this is where the block party will begin, running from 4 PM to 7 PM.

A photo booth, drag makeup, face painting, sidewalk chalk, tarot readings, performances, speakers, food, and good company await those celebrating the LGBTQIA+ community!

“Greenbrier Valley Pride means so much to me as a queer woman having grown up in Southern West Virginia,” said Greenbrier Valley Pride President Kelsie Tyson. “I am so excited to get decked out in rainbow-gear and watch local queens perform. I cannot wait to connect with my community! My hope is that this event serves as a safe space and celebration for our local LGBTQIA+ folks and allies.”

Booths from both Seneca Health Services and the Family Refuge Center will be offering resources for suicide prevention, intimate partner and sexual violence, comprehensive sexual education, and more. Seneca Health’s own Batman will give out free emergency doses of the opioid overdose reversal drug Narcan and teach people how to use the life-saving tool.

Information for those questioning their gender identity will be available at both the transgender health booth and discretely with both Seneca and FRC. Those with kids, family, or friends in the transgender community are also encouraged to come, to learn how show local support and be the best ally they can be during a time when transgender lives are being politically attacked.

American Civil Liberties Union of West Virginia (ACLU), fresh on a recent Department of Justice memo filed in support of a lawsuit against West Virginia's transgender athlete ban for being unconstitutional, will have an information booth available to do outreach. The Greenbrier Valley Democrats will also be engaging in outreach and providing information to unregistered voters.

The 30 pole banners of downtown Lewisburg honor the city's inclusive values and often raise awareness of key issues in an effort to improve the lives of victims of violence and oppression, such as the Black History Month banners that are displayed in February shortly after the Martin Luther King Jr. Day banners fly in January. GVP is adding their own to the list, designed by Tamarack Emerging Artist Fellow and Ronceverte-raised Kelsie Tyson. Thanks to community support and the work of Greenbrier Printing, the banners are fully funded and will hopefully hang throughout town during the event.

In addition to Tyson and Vice President Matt Parsley, the group is currently structuring themselves to prepare and plan future events. Until this process is complete, the leadership positions are not official, but a group vote approved the interim leadership for Greenbrier Valley Pride:

- Secretary Hannah Bell
- Treasurer Kayla M. McCoy
- Communications Director Jorge Rodriguez-Stanley
- Events Coordinator Kiersten White
- Safety Officer/Volunteer Coordinator Jamie Johans Crosier
- Board members Molly Arbogast, Bobby Bordelon, Sarah Ream Driggers, Rebekah Danielle Fallin, Courtney Hereford, Cici McLay, Brian Perdue, and Damie Spencer

"Spending my summer being a part of this amazing group of people has been incredibly inspirational," said Parsley. "From the second the idea was mentioned, I have witnessed the hard work and dedication of an incredible team who has gone above and beyond to make this event come to fruition. Being a native of southern West Virginia, the implementation of the event speaks volumes about the progress and growth our state has exhibited; the mere visibility has the potential to help so many people become comfortable in their identities, and it is an honor to be able to make any contributions I can."

The community is also joined by the many, many volunteers and members of Greenbrier Valley Pride. For more information on how to help or join, please visit [Facebook.com/gbvpride](https://www.facebook.com/gbvpride)

Although many victories remain to be won for the right to live honestly, Greenbrier Valley Pride also celebrates the protections provided by the Supreme Court to members of the LGBTQIA+ community, such as in *Obergefell v. Hodges* in which guaranteed the fundamental right to marry to same-sex couples, and the Equality Act passed by the House of Representatives.

This also includes a 6-3 decision in three cases from the U.S. Supreme Court in 2020, finally bringing both sexual orientation and gender identity into the umbrella protections provided for sex in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

“An employer who fires an individual for being homosexual or transgender fires that person for traits or actions it would not have questioned in members of a different sex,” Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote in a majority opinion for *Bostock v. Clayton County*. “Sex plays a necessary and undisguisable role in the decision, exactly what Title VII forbids.”

Clinics in Greenbrier County vaccinate nearly 400 animals against rabies

By bobby bordelon wvdc | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

The 2021 Greenbrier County Rabies Clinics vaccinated nearly 400 animals over five days at a discounted rate for residents across the county.

Hosted by Greenbrier County Assessor Joe Darnell and his office, the clinics traveled across the county in order to vaccinate as many animals as they could. In early June, they were joined by the Greenbrier County Sheriff's Department, veterinarians from offices across the county, local animal control, and residents with ample animals to vaccinate.

“During this five-day span we did, we vaccinated close to 400 animals,” Darnell said. “Because of the size of the county and the desolate areas, if it weren't for this, there would be so many unvaccinated animals. ... That's the whole idea, to get these animals that wouldn't get a chance to get to a vet. ... It's just a precautionary measure that most animal lovers want to take. They want to protect their animals as much as they can.”

The clinics provide benefits to each group involved, including those getting the vaccines for their pets, hunting dogs, or fur babies.

“It's good for the vets because they feel good about getting these dogs and cats vaccinated. It's good for us to have the exposure, sell dog tags,” Darnell said. “It's one-stop shopping, so to speak, they get their license for the year, they get their rabies shot, and all for a discounted price. They can leave their house, come to the clinic, and go back to their house in 15 minutes.”

Administering the vaccines were Dr. Julie Gibson of Frankford Veterinary Hospital, Dr. Angie Clark of Alderson Veterinary Service, Dr. Mary Ann Mann of Lewisburg Veterinary Hospital, and Dr. Patrick McHale of Seneca Trail Animal Hospital.

“I want to give kudos to the vets that are doing the clinics,” Darnell said. “They're doing vaccinations at \$8 instead of [making someone] to go to an office, where you get an office visit fee, plus a \$25 rabies shot. There are guys who have multiple hunting dogs, they'll get eight of them vaccinated for \$60, as opposed to \$300 going to the vet. ... They want to do it to help the animals. They're not out there making money off \$8 a shot, they're doing it as a service as well. We're there to serve the citizens of Greenbrier County.”

The clinic moved across the county over five days, with clinics in Craig, Rainelle, Marfrance, Quinwood, Leslie, Charmco, Hines, Rupert, Smoot, Grassy Meadows, Clintonville, Asbury, Fort Spring, Ronceverte, Organ Cave, Auto, Renick, Frankford, Williamsburg, Cornstalk, Neola, Alvon, White Sulphur Springs, Tuckahoe, and Caldwell. While traveling from place to place, the clinics also allow Darnell to meet more of the county's residents. He recalled the thanks he got from one.

“This guy ... he’s got 23 chihuahuas,” Darnell said with a laugh. “They live in one camper and the dogs live in another camper. They get those dogs, they buy their shots, they get their dog tags, they spent \$300 or \$400. It’s unreal, but they look forward to us coming. They thank us, they’re just such good people.”

The clinics are expected to return next year — for those still needing a rabies vaccine, they are available through the veterinary clinics listed above. Darnell thanked everyone in his office, the sheriff’s office, and anyone helping make the clinic a success.

“These people so look forward to it because that’s their only chance at getting their animals vaccinated,” Darnell said. “They want to do the right thing, but it wouldn’t be plausible to be able to make a trip to where they would have to go and the expense of it as well.”

Raleigh County Commissioners Discuss Broadband Expansion, Distribute Funds

By autumn shelton | WVDN JUN 23, 2021

WV Sen. Rollan Roberts (R-Raleigh) has mixed feelings about the American Rescue Plan, but he told Raleigh County County Commissioners he was going to work toward ensuring District 9 gets some of the funding the plan will provide.

Roberts spoke before the commissioners during their Tuesday, June 22, meeting, just two days before the WV State Legislature plans to meet in a special session to consider the fate of \$250 million in supplementary appropriations for 21 different state initiatives.

“You are about to enter into a challenging time,” Roberts began. “The money that is being given to the municipalities, to the cities and to the counties is going to come with strings attached to some extent, but it will also be a great opportunity.”

He noted that he wants to be fiscally responsible, but \$755 million is in the bank for West Virginia and more will be coming. That money can be “piggybacked” and “partnered” with areas to complete much-needed county projects.

“I don’t want us to lose out,” Roberts said, comparing what is going on with fund distribution as a type of gold rush. He said this funding will support numerous projects throughout southern West Virginia including economic development of the New River Gorge National Park and for expanding broadband access throughout rural areas.

The USDA Rural Development Fund has already been set up to provide \$8 million per year to West Virginia for the next 10 years to create a network of broadband connections, Roberts explained. However, more funding is needed.

Continuing discussion on broadband access, Commissioner Dave Tolliver told Roberts that the commission needs help finding a solution with fiber optics franchise owners who will not return their phone calls.

According to Tolliver, commissioners would like to use funding to expand broadband down Route 3 from Glen Daniel to Whitesville and along Co. Route 1, but they cannot move forward with the plan until Segra (a

Virginia-based company that owns the fiber network franchise) representatives establish communication.

“What will we do if Segra doesn’t give us permission to hit the poles?” Tolliver asked.

Roberts said that the varying layers of service providers and pole ownership throughout the region is a “conglomerate mess.”

Because the many different layers of corporate ownership are difficult to manage, further legislation might be needed to end this practice — just as with a recent law to change how Frontier gave access to the poles, Roberts stated.

“With Segra, I’d be happy to go to bat,” Roberts said. “We need to play hardball.”

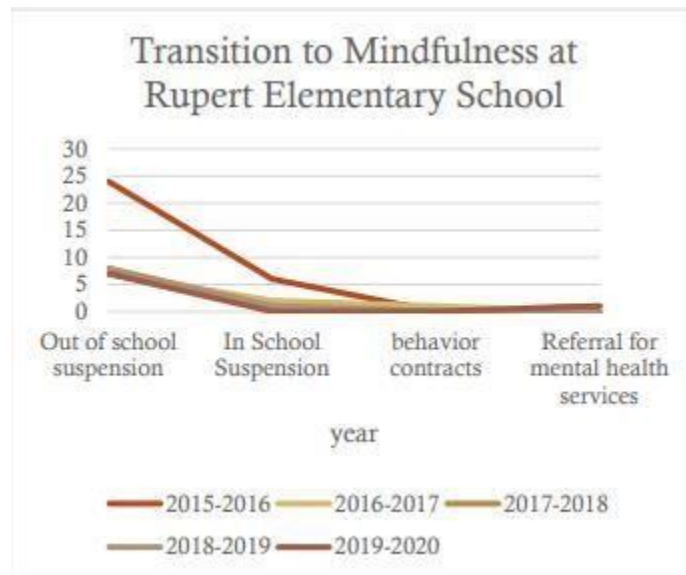
Tolliver concluded that students in some of those rural areas must travel to Liberty High School or another location to get to an internet hotspot and that the commissioners will continue to work with state officials to ensure broadband expansion is a success.

In other Raleigh County Commission business, Morgan Spolarich was approved as a new Raleigh County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney; commissioners approved a request from the EOC to change the name of Ellis Street to Daisy Way; commissioners approved the purchase of an \$18,000 forklift for the Lillian James Learning Center; commissioners approved a \$10,000 request from the Whitesville Volunteer Fire Department to update the radio communications system for the ambulance service; commissioners approved the purchase of 10 radios for litter and animal control at the cost of \$35,000; commissioners approved a \$5,000 DUI grant for the Raleigh County Sheriff’s Department; and, commissioners approved the 2021 AML economic grant pilot program for the Piney View/Batoff Mountain sewer extension.

The next meeting of the Raleigh County Commission will take place on July 6, at 10 a.m. in the Raleigh County Commission Chamber.

Rupert Elementary Has A Mindfulness Success Story

By jenny harden micah gregory ilana haliwa and traci jarrett | WVDN JUN 23, 2021



Extensive research suggests that stress and trauma experienced during childhood can have a significant effect on social, emotional, behavioral, and physiological development. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction have been significantly associated with poor emotion regulation, worse mental health, and worse physical health outcomes (e.g., drug use, heart disease, liver disease; Centers for Disease Control, 2019; Cloitre et al., 2019; Felitti et al. 1988). In the state of West Virginia, the majority of children under the age of 18 (52%) have experienced at least one ACE, compared to 46% nationally (ACES Coalition WV, 2018).

Adverse childhood experiences are more common in rural, and low-income households (Halfon et al., 2017; HRSA, 2020). As West Virginia is classified as a rural state with the 6th highest poverty rate in the United States (US Census, 2020), childhood trauma is a critical concern within the state. Further, children experiencing trauma have a greater likelihood of problem behavior and poorer school performance (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018).

Thus, it is crucial to identify environments and mechanisms to mitigate the negative outcomes associated with these adverse events within the state of West Virginia. Fortunately, evidence suggests that some interventions, including school-based mindfulness training, can improve outcomes following exposure to trauma (Ortiz & Sibinga, 2017).

Jenny Harden, a principal at Rupert Elementary, became interested in mindfulness six years ago. After accepting the role of principal, she began to notice high rates of behavioral challenges among her students, including classroom outbursts and physical aggression.

Indeed, 30 students were suspended in the 2015 - 2016 school year alone. She noted that many of her students had not yet learned to regulate their behavior and emotions in a healthy way and believed that a critical role of educators was to help children learn these skills.

“We teach kids math and we teach kids reading. We need to teach them behavior, we don’t need to punish them.”

One afternoon, a student was sent to her office for exhibiting problematic behavior in the classroom and was experiencing high levels of emotional distress and was also being physically violent. As a last-minute recourse to try and get the student to calm down, Jenny asked him to lay down and to focus on breathing with her. After observing the calming effect of this impromptu breathing exercise, Jenny became curious about the use of breathing and grounding for assisting youth with emotion regulation.

“It came out of nowhere and it worked, we have to figure out where this is coming from, and we started to dig into research.

"Her search for research and resources led her to mindfulness, or the practice of approaching emotions and sensations with kindness and curiosity (Viafora et al., 2015), often accomplished using breathing exercises, yoga, and meditation. Jenny began by simply googling "how to calm kids down", which eventually led her to mindfulness resources from the author Annaka Harris (<https://annakaharris.com/mindfulness-forchildren/>) and to Amy Snodgrass the co-founder of Mindful WV (<https://www.mindfulwv.org/>), a statewide collaborative effort to promote the use of mindfulness in West Virginia to build youth, family, and community resilience. Slowly, Jenny began learning more about the use of school-based mindfulness and regularly using brief mindfulness exercises with students that came into her office requiring help with emotion or behavior regulation. Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, mindfulness activities were implemented in the classroom at every grade-level. Teachers were encouraged to approach mindfulness training as a professional development opportunity, as way to better support their students, and to approach the exercises as their own form of self-care.

Results were almost immediate, and Rupert Elementary School saw a 70% drop in suspension rates that same year. Today, mindfulness exercises such as morning mindfulness, exercises involving music, yoga programs specifically designed for kids, and mindful coloring are among the resources used by teachers and staff within the classrooms.

Children are also taught and given the space to self-regulate their emotions through "take a break" cards and mediation. The program has been widely accepted and students have been observed using these practices on their own in the hallways and at recess. "We had one student, last year who had a lot of trouble and was [sent to my] office a lot and would say that he 'got so mad', and now he initiates a 'take a break' cards [he'll come in on his own to my office] and I have a little Zen garden and he'll decorate the Zen garden and put himself together [...] and now I'll see him 1-2 a week instead 3-4 a day."

Since the start of COVID-19, parents that have children engaged in remote learning have also reported that kids are using these tools to express their feelings in a healthy manner.

"I have heard stories from my parents relating how their kids will sit down [when faced with anger or conflict at home] and say, 'peace begins with me' and then they'll try and figure things out."

These mindfulness exercises have provided students with healthy resources for managing emotions and coping with challenges ranging from school- and home-based stressors to those associated with a global pandemic that has fundamentally changed daily life.

Principal Harden concludes, "The resiliency we can teach them through a trauma informed lens, even though they're in trauma daily, they can feel safe, learn those tools and be a successful peaceful adult."