

WVDN JUN 28, 2021



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Dear Abby: Monday, June 28

By Abigail Van Buren | WVDN JUN 28, 2021

Tears Keep Flowing Despite Life's Many Blessings

DEAR ABBY: I am a very fortunate 60-year-old male. I have a wonderful life, great kids, I'm a new grandfather and I'm recently retired. I think I am a happy and overall positive person. Most people would be thrilled to have my life. However, I can't seem to stop crying. I tear up at the end of every sad or romantic movie. I choke up when I'm around my loved ones, and it is only getting worse. I wonder if it is because of pain I experienced in my past (deaths of loved ones, divorce, etc.) or fear about the future. Do you have any insight based on your experience? — TEARING UP IN OHIO

DEAR TEARING UP: The death of loved ones can make a person increasingly emotional. Being able to express emotion is a gift, not a disability. You may simply be a sensitive individual, but because you say this is "only getting worse," it might benefit you to discuss what's going on with your physician or a licensed mental health professional who can put your concerns to rest.

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DEAR ABBY: My ex-girlfriend and I have been good friends for the past five years. Even though our relationship didn't work out, I still want to be there for her as a friend. My ex isn't that financially responsible, nor is her family, and she keeps asking me for bailouts. I have loaned her thousands of dollars since our breakup, Abby. I am of two minds about this. Part of me feels I'm being taken advantage of. However, the other part of me knows she doesn't have many friends and, because I believe in karma, I tend to help those in need. Please tell me what I should do. Should I continue helping or let her fail? — LENDING A HELPING HAND

DEAR LENDING: There is a point after which "helping" becomes enabling. You reached that milestone years ago. It's time to let your ex-girlfriend suffer the consequences of her financial irresponsibility so you can focus on helping people who won't take advantage of your generosity.

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DEAR ABBY: My husband and I used to be very close to another couple in town. Before the pandemic, they caused quite a bit of pain and drama among our friend group, so we decided to add some distance. The pandemic provided the perfect excuse. We exchange texts every few weeks, but otherwise we don't interact much. The problem is, now that we're all vaccinated, they want to be friends again and we just aren't up for it. We don't know the best way to clearly end the friendship. How do you break up with friends? — MOVED ON IN THE MIDWEST

DEAR MOVED ON: If you want to end the friendship, a way to do that would be to be "busy" and not available to them. If you are asked for an explanation, tell them the pandemic forced you to rethink your schedule, that you see fewer people than you did before it happened — and therefore you are no longer available to the extent that you were. It's kinder than saying you think they are troublemaking drama queens, which would be unkind and cause hurt feelings.

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Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Spartan Baseball Had Great Regular Season Before Falling in Sectionals

By by brandon baker | WVDN JUN 28, 2021

The Greenbrier East Spartans baseball team got off to fast start this past season, continued their great play through the middle portion of the year, then faltered down the stretch with two shocking losses to Oak Hill in the sectional championship series that sent them home way earlier than expected.

They finished 18-6, but cannot help but feel they left a lot of baseball unfinished.

East had big wins over George Washington (twice), Capital and Ripley. They also outscored rivals Beckley, 27-13 and Princeton 32-0.

Darris Boswell led the Spartans at the plate with a .438 batting average. He also had 18 RBI's and scored a team-leading 38 runs. Boswell should return next season as one of the leaders on the team.

Jordan Mize was second on the team with an average of .382. The Glenville State signee scored 25 runs, knocked in 20 more and led the team with eight doubles. He will begin his career with the Pioneers next Spring.

Logan Carr and Chris Heaster also provided the Spartans with plenty of offense with high batting averages of .366 and .354, respectively.

Carr was second on the team in total hits with 30 and he also drove in 20 runs. Heaster drove in 14 runs and was second on the team with seven doubles.

Noah Hanna, who signed with Allegany College of Maryland, hit .338. He tied for the team lead with 24 RBI's, scored 20 runs and tied with Mize for the team lead in doubles with eight.

Zac Trump (.296) and Tanner Skidmore (.254) also produced in a big way for East. The duo will continue their careers together next year at Mid Atlantic Christian. Trump scored 21 runs on the season and had 14 RBI's. Skidmore tied for the team lead in RBI's with 24 and also came across home plate 14 times.

Not to be forgotten was Isiah Brooks. The prototype leadoff man, Brooks scored a team leading 28 runs and hit .303 at the plate.

On the pitcher's mound, East looked to Caleb Thomas (38.2 innings pitched), Jacob Graham (33), Daniel Wygal (29), Carr(27.2) and Jacob Roshau (22.1).

Thomas finished 5-1 with an impressive .90 ERA. He struck out 54 hitters and allowed batters to hit just .184 against him. He will continue his playing career at Bluefield State next season.

Graham finished 3-1, Wygal 3-0, Carr 2-0 and Roshau went 3-1 with two saves.

Graham gave up 31 hits and struck out 32. His ERA was 3.6.

Wygal had 24 strikeouts and posted a 1.69 ERA. Carr's ERA was 3.79 to go along with 26 strikeouts, and Roshau struck out 26 as well, and had an ERA of 4.07.

Coach Cory Mann's squad will return to the diamond next Spring of 2022.

He knows his players were thankful just to play this year even though it did not end as they hoped.

Back in mid-May, Mann said, "Our guys know what it feels like to have a season end abruptly since last year was canceled and truly came out this year excited for the opportunity to be on the baseball field that day."

"Our veterans took the younger guys under their wings and helped them be able to step up in key situations," Mann concluded.

Five of East's graduating seniors signed to play baseball in college.

Understanding Harm Reduction: Part 1 - National Council Distributes Grants To 16 Harm Reduction Organizations to Address Nation's Overdose Crisis

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 28, 2021

America continues to struggle with a public health crisis that remains overshadowed.

Overdose deaths increased last year in all but three states, a fact obscured by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows 83,544 people died from an overdose in the 12-month period ending July 2020, a 22.8% increase in overdose deaths compared to the previous year.

To address the nation's overdose crisis the CDC has initiated a new program, administered by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, to promote harm reduction strategies through a series of 16 grants to organizations across the country with harm reduction initiatives.

"The decision by the CDC to partner with us to support organizations and their harm reduction efforts sends a strong signal that harm reduction is an effective, practical strategy to prevent overdoses and overdose deaths," National Council for Mental Wellbeing President and CEO Chuck Ingoglia said. "These grants provide more resources for communities to address the overdose crisis."

Harm reduction strategies — a wide range of approaches including syringe service programs (SSPs), distribution of naloxone to reverse overdoses and drug checking equipment to ensure drugs aren't laced with fentanyl — have slowly and steadily gained attention as effective, practical approaches to address the nation's overdose epidemic.

"Harm reduction programs can save lives," Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse at the National Institutes of Health, told the National Council. "As drug overdose deaths increase, it becomes increasingly important to offer lifesaving solutions in communities to mitigate the harm of drug use and bring resources to those most vulnerable, who might not have access to help or treatment otherwise."

The CDC has funded other harm reduction efforts and acknowledges harm reduction strategies as legitimate initiatives to address overdoses and overdose deaths. This new grant program is the first of its kind administered by the National Council.

Harm reduction advocates are applauding the program because the pandemic has caused a spike in overdoses and overdose deaths.

The social isolation and economic impact caused by COVID-19 played a significant role in the increase of overdoses and overdose deaths, according to public health officials. The widespread availability of drugs, an increasing volume of tainted drugs and the changing nature of drug use also played a role in increasing overdoses and overdose deaths.

Fentanyl, a potent synthetic opioid, is a primary culprit behind the nation's overdose crisis, but several classes of substances also have played a role, including a broad range of depressants like alcohol and stimulants like cocaine and methamphetamines. Polysubstance use — when more than one substance is involved — also has contributed to overdose deaths because of more potent and adulterated illicit drugs.

Broader adoption of harm reduction strategies can help communities respond to overdoses while also providing evidence of the value harm reduction facilities provide, harm reduction advocates say.

“The pandemic has proven how essential our work is but also how challenging the work can be without adequate financial support and political will to prioritize these life-saving programs,” said Sheila Vakharia, deputy director, department of research and academic engagement, at the Drug Policy Alliance, which supports drug policy reform.

There has been progress during the pandemic in efforts to promote the efficacy of harm reduction initiatives, Vakharia said. The American Medical Association in July urged states to remove barriers SSPs face to reduce overdose deaths and the spread of infectious diseases, and the organization cited Maine's syringe exchange program as an example for other states to follow.

But harm reduction organizations continue to face obstacles, Vakharia said, including the lack of funding.

The CDC grants administered by the National Council will offer assistance by funding key harm reduction initiatives.

More importantly, the Biden administration included \$30 million to fund harm reduction in the latest relief bill, the American Rescue Plan.

While new funding will help harm reduction advocates provide treatment and services to people who use drugs, those organizations still face cultural and political hurdles that may take longer to overcome.

“The search for more strategies to address our nation's crippling overdose crisis led the CDC to partner with us on this new grant program that we're so proud to administer,” said former National Council Senior Advisor Tom Hill, who now works for the Biden administration in the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. “Harm reduction has been around for decades, but acceptance of harm reduction strategies remains painfully slow. The grants and the important work of the organizations receiving these grants will help demonstrate the value of harm reduction and the urgent need to adopt these strategies.”

This project is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$750,000 with 100% funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CDC/HHS or the U.S. Government.

Girl Scouts Host Weeklong GIRL Fest Full Of Adventure

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 28, 2021

OAK HILL, WEST VIRGINIA — Hundreds of Girl Scouts from across the country are converging at ACE Adventure Resort for a week of rafting, climbing, kayaking, zip lining, racing through mud and much more.

The Girl Scouts of Black Diamond Council is hosting the 2021 GIRL Fest, a weeklong event where girls enjoy outdoor adventure, as well as learn about conservation, conduct research and collect data from nature. Approximately 380 participants from 17 different states will call ACE Adventure Resort home Monday, June 28, through Thursday, July 1.

“Not only is GIRL Fest an opportunity for Girl Scouts from all over the United States to meet others and have some high-adventure fun, but it’s also a time for them to learn about the outdoors how they contribute to making the world a better place,” said Beth Casey, CEO of the Girl Scouts of Black Diamond Council.

Activities for the week include whitewater rafting, zip lining, trekking through a mud obstacle challenge course, rock climbing, stand-up paddle boarding, climbing waterpark inflatables and kayaking, as well as other outdoor activities.

Programming for the week includes ceremonies, socials, award work, service projects and more. Girls will learn how to study nature as part of the “Think Like a Citizen Scientist” Journey; how to conduct stewardship and survivorship as part of the “Trail Blazer Membership Pin” Activities; and how to plant trees and contribute to conservation efforts as part of the “Tree Promise Service Project,” which is a nationwide effort to plan 5 million trees across America in five years.

The event generates an estimated economic impact of \$465,863 for the local area between the lodging, meals and additional programming.

GIRL Fest is just one of many incredible adventures that Girl Scouts can enjoy as part of the organization. Girl Scouts is the preeminent leadership development organization for girls, where they can learn, make friends and have fun. For more information, visit bdgsc.org.

About Girl Scouts of Black Diamond Council

Working in partnership with nearly 3,000 volunteers, Girl Scouts of Black Diamond Council serves nearly 8,000 girls in 61 counties in West Virginia, Virginia, Ohio and Maryland. For more information on how to join, volunteer, or donate to Girl Scouts of Black Diamond Council, call 1.800.756.7616 or visit the council’s website at www.bdgsc.org. Girl Scouts is the preeminent leadership development organization for girls, with 2.6 million girl and adult members worldwide. Girl Scouts builds girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place.

Greenbrier County Health Department To Hold

Meeting

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 28, 2021



The Greenbrier County Health Department will hold a Special Session meeting on Wednesday, July 30 at 10 a.m. The meeting will take place at the Health Department offices in Fairlea.

Agenda

Approval of minutes:

- May 19, 2021

Financial:

- Architect, Land Acquisition, Renovation and New Construction
- ELC Expansion Grant

Schedule Next Board of Health Meeting:

- Tentative: Wednesday, July 21 at 10 a.m.

Martin Elected President Of WVEA-Retired

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 28, 2021



At the annual West Virginia Education Association — Retired meeting, held at the Marriott Hotel in Charleston, on May 14, Kathy H. Martin was elected to a three-year term as president.

Kathy has been involved for 45-years with the organization in many different capacities. As a former teacher, she was a member for 33-years, lobbyist for one legislative year, an Organizational Development Specialist for the counties of Monroe, Fayette, Raleigh, Mercer, Summers, Greenbrier, Pocahontas and Bluefield State College for seven-years, and a retired member for four-years. She has been serving on the retired executive council since 2019.

Martin currently lives on a purebred Angus farm in Smoot with her husband Bob, who is also a retired teacher.

GVCF - United Way Distributes Grants To Area Food Banks

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 28, 2021

In an effort to respond to the effects of novel coronavirus in local communities, the Greenbrier Valley Community Foundation (GVCF) sought to provide support to local nonprofits in as many ways as possible. The organization partnered with the United Way of the Greenbrier Valley and started a COVID Relief Fund, raising

and distributing/pledging over \$215,000 to nonprofits directly responding to the pandemic. Organizations providing feeding programs, senior services, basic needs support, and virtual education support received funding from this program. Additionally, the fund provided assistance to first responders and medical professionals by providing funding for PPE, large—scale sanitizing equipment, and mobile testing units.

As life returns to “normal”, food pantries are still seeing increased demand from local residents. To help meet this need, GVCF and the United Way of the GBV provided an additional \$30,000 in grant funding to food pantries and basic needs service organizations in all corners and spots in between in Greenbrier, Monroe, and Pocahontas counties. The following organizations received this second round of grant funding of the organizations’ joint COVID Relief Fund:

- Alderson Ministerial Association Food Pantry
- Lindside United Methodist Church Food Pantry
- Mountaineer Food Bank
- Union United Methodist Church Community Food Pantry
- Monroe County Coalition
- First Baptist Church of Rainelle Food Pantry
- Pocahontas County Cooperative Ministries Food Pantry
- Pocahontas County Senior Citizens
- Mount Hermon United Methodist Church Food Pantry
- Pocahontas County Family Resource Network
- Northern Pocahontas Food Pantry
- United Methodist Emergency Food Pantry

It is our hope that these grants will help these organizations continue to feed our communities. When these organizations thrive, as does the Greenbrier Valley, and it is our great pleasure to help.

Please direct any questions to Anne at 304-645-5620 or info@gvfoundation.org.

Gbr. Republican Club To Hold July Meeting

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUN 28, 2021

The Greenbrier County Republican Club will meet at the County Courthouse (Court Street) on Thursday, July 1. President Doug McKinney will call the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. On the agenda are the Alderson 4th of July Parade scheduled for Saturday, July 3rd and the Great American Comeback Picnic to be held Saturday, July 24th.

Kim Klacik will be the keynote speaker at the Greenbrier Christian Retreat in Crawley. Cookout tickets will be available for purchase at the meeting. Cash or check for \$20 appreciated.

A sign-up schedule for the State Fair Republican booth will be available. All members are encouraged to volunteer for one or more of these activities.

2 private WV schools will require student vaccination

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUN 28, 2021

CHARLETON, W.Va. (AP) — At least a couple of private West Virginia schools are requiring students to be vaccinated against COVID-19 this fall.

The University of Charleston and Bethany College both say vaccinations will be required for the upcoming school year.

University of Charleston President Marty Roth told news outlets that it is the school's responsibility to provide a healthy environment for the 1,500 students expected at the Charleston campus and 200 at the Beckley campus. The way to do that is to require students to be vaccinated, he said.

Students at the university won't have to wear masks, but three feet of social distancing will be required in classrooms and public spaces, Roth said.

Bethany College's vaccination requirement was decided by the college's Pandemic Response Team in accordance with Centers for Disease Control guidance, the school said.

"I applaud our community for its commitment to protecting one another, and I believe strongly that our decision to require the vaccine will maximize the Bethany experience even more," Bethany President Tamara Nichols Rodenberg said in an email announcing the update.

J&J agrees to pay \$230M to settle New York opioid claim

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUN 28, 2021

NEW YORK (AP) — Johnson & Johnson has agreed to pay \$230 million to New York state to settle claims that the pharmaceutical giant helped fuel the opioid crisis, Attorney General Letitia James said on Saturday.

The drugmaker also agreed to permanently end the manufacturing and distribution of opioids across New York and the rest of the nation, James said in a statement announcing the settlement.

The company "helped fuel this fire, but today they're committing to leaving the opioid business — not only in New York, but across the entire country," she said.

The deal involving a lawsuit brought by James in 2019 removes Johnson & Johnson from a trial that is slated to begin next week on Long Island — part of a slew of litigation over an epidemic linked to nearly 500,000 deaths over the last two decades.

In its own statement on Saturday, Johnson & Johnson downplayed the attorney general's announcement. It

said the settlement involved two prescription painkillers — developed by a subsidiary and accounting for less than 1% of the market — that are already no longer sold in the U.S.

The settlement was “not an admission of liability or wrongdoing by the company,” Johnson & Johnson said. It added that its actions “relating to the marketing and promotion of important prescription pain medications were appropriate and responsible.”

The settlement was the latest development in the complicated universe of opioid-related lawsuits across the U.S. that has drawn comparisons to the multistate litigation against tobacco companies in the 1990s. It reflects a path being taken by some big drug companies that see settling as in their best interests, in part because that route would likely not cost as much as losing in court repeatedly.

Johnson & Johnson — along with distributors AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health and McKesson — made public last year that they were offering a total of \$26 billion over 18 years to settle all the cases they face, with the money going to abate the crisis.

In Georgia, Herschel Walker puts GOP in a holding pattern

By bill barrow the associated press | WVDN JUN 28, 2021

ATLANTA (AP) — The recently ousted former senator who wants her old job back. A football hero considering his first run for office. Little-known politicians eyeing promotions. And a former president overshadowing them all in a state he lost last November.

Republicans' U.S. Senate nomination in a premier battleground like Georgia is a plum political prize, but a year before GOP voters choose a nominee for the 2022 midterms, they have no clear options. That leaves some power players worried about the party's chances to defeat freshman Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock as they try to reclaim a Senate majority.

The glaring unknown as potential contenders consider their plans: whether political neophyte Herschel Walker will enter the race with the endorsement of his close friend, Donald Trump. Walker is a beloved Heisman Trophy winner and retired professional football star who played in the short-lived U.S. Football League when Trump was a team owner in the 1980s. Now, Trump is the former president who has divided Georgia Republicans with promises of vengeance against those he insists didn't do enough to help him overturn his defeat.

Together, they may be the most popular duo among Georgia Republicans.

Walker, who has joined in Trump's false assertions that the 2020 election was fraudulent, has stoked chatter about a Senate bid for months and discussed the race with national party leaders including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Florida Sen. Rick Scott, head of the GOP's Senate campaign committee.

Trump has publicly encouraged Walker to enter the primary.

Walker, who recently attended Trump's private birthday celebration, has not indicated when he'll announce a decision. But the mere possibility of him running is enough to leave other would-be candidates in a holding pattern in a state where Democratic victories in 2020 highlighted Republicans' narrow margin of error.

The GOP bench most notably includes former Sen. Kelly Loeffler, who lost a to Warnock in a January special election runoff, and U.S. Rep. Buddy Carter, a four-term congressman from near Savannah who has never run statewide.

Eric Tanenblatt, a top national Republican fundraiser and a principal at the law firm Dentons, called the GOP indecision “unfortunate” and warned that Warnock, the first Black senator from Georgia, will be a “formidable candidate” with a fundraising head start and no significant primary opposition as he seeks his first full Senate

term.

"I guess my hope is that if Herschel does it, he decides to do it sooner than later," Tanenblatt said. "You have people waiting to jump on board, but it almost becomes a little too late."

Walker, 59, stirred fresh speculation about a Senate bid with a recent social media post showing the longtime Texas resident beside a car with a Georgia license plate. In the video, Walker declared himself "ready" to "run with the big dogs." But he has not set up any visible political operation in Georgia, and it's still not clear he's established residency in the state. He had no presence at the annual state Republican convention or district and county conventions earlier this spring, leaving some Republicans frustrated.

"You've got to get out there and meet people, and it takes time to do that" in an expansive, populous state, said Jack Kingston, a former south Georgia congressman and 2014 Senate candidate. "Republican primary voters get mad easily if you don't come to their events, even if you're Herschel Walker."

That's a contrast to a handful of declared candidates, led by Gary Black, the longtime state agriculture commissioner, and would-be candidates like Loeffler and Carter.

Loeffler, who had been the Senate's wealthiest member, has traveled the state since her defeat to pitch her new political organization, Greater Georgia. She bills it as a conservative retort to Democrat Stacey Abrams' Fair Fight group.

The former senator also met recently with McConnell to talk about running again. A Republican close to Loeffler described the conversation as encouraging and suggested McConnell is intrigued by Loeffler's ability to self-fund. The Republican spoke on condition of anonymity to speak frankly about Loeffler's plans.

To be sure, national Republican leaders are not clamoring publicly for a Walker candidacy. The National Republican Senatorial Committee, which Florida's Scott leads, has no plans to take sides in any open primary, according to aides. McConnell, who has his own political operation and fundraising network, has made no such commitment.

Loeffler and Carter, meanwhile, are already deferring to the potential celebrity candidate: Carter has said publicly he wouldn't run if Walker does, and Loeffler's allies say it remains unlikely she'd be willing to tangle with him either.

Still, that doesn't mean Republicans are ready for a coronation.

"Herschel is the ultimate wild card — high upside, but plenty of risk," said Chip Lake, a Republican strategist in Georgia and around the South.

Randy Evans, a Georgia Republican and U.S. ambassador to Luxembourg under Trump, argued that Walker, who is Black, could expand the GOP's appeal among Black votes in a general election, denting a Democratic advantage that helped elect Warnock. Other Republican players say that notion is exaggerated.

In the smoothest scenario, Walker would leverage his statewide fame and business success — he owns a Georgia-based poultry supplier, among other interests — to bridge the gap between the Trump's strident base and the more moderate middle that helped tilt Georgia to Democrats in 2020.

"If Hershel runs, Donald Trump will come to Georgia as many times as Herschel will have him," Evans predicted.

Tanenblatt countered: "That cuts both ways."

Indeed, Walker could sail through a primary as Trump's preferred choice but fall short in November in the Atlanta suburbs where the former president's imprimatur is a liability and where Republicans lost electoral votes and two U.S. Senate seats.

"There are traditional Republicans and donors who are still salty about losing those Senate seats, and they blame the president," said Tanenblatt.

Then there are the worst-case scenarios some Republicans muse about privately: Walker could simply wilt under the pressures of a nationalized campaign. He has written previously about his struggles with mental illness and likely would have to discuss that again, while also facing scrutiny on policy matters he's never had to address in detail. He could end up either a weak nominee or a primary flame-out who leaves the GOP scrambling for an alternative.

"This whole thing just captures the issue for Republicans right now in Georgia," said Lake. "We have a whole lot of Republicans who love Donald Trump and everyone who supports him. And we have a faction that just

wants to move on. To win, we have to get those two groups to vote for the same person without realizing it. Can Herschel Walker or anybody else do that?"

Lewisburg Hosts Successful Greenbrier Valley Pride Event

By by matthew young | WVDN JUN 28, 2021



The Greenbrier Valley showed its colors on Saturday, June 26, as the area's first-ever Pride event covered downtown Lewisburg in a blanket of rainbows and smiling faces. People of all ages, races and walks of life came out to gather with friends, both old and new, to celebrate our uniqueness, as well as our shared humanity.

The month of June is recognized nationally as LGBTQIA+ Pride Month.

According to youth.gov, Pride Month is celebrated "to honor the 1969 Stonewall riots and works to achieve equal justice and equal opportunity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) Americans. In June of 1969, patrons and supporters of the Stonewall Inn in New York City staged an uprising to resist the police harassment and persecution to which LGBT Americans were commonly subjected. This uprising marks the beginning of a movement to outlaw discriminatory laws and practices against LGBT

Americans.”

The organizers behind the event, “Greenbrier Valley Pride,” are a relatively new group, describing themselves as being “dedicated to inclusivity and the celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community throughout the region.”

The Lewisburg event came just two weeks after a similarly successful event was held in Beckley.

“Greenbrier Valley Pride means so much to me as a queer woman having grown up in southern West Virginia,” said Kelsie Tyson, local artist and president of Greenbrier Valley Pride, in a statement released earlier in the week. “My hope is that this event serves as a safe space and celebration for our local LGBTQIA+ folks and allies.”

The event kicked off at 3 p.m. with a parade down Washington Street and continuing onto Court Street. Men, women and children carrying signs with slogans such as “love is love,” “no hate in my holler” and simply “ally” marched to the cheers of hundreds of approving spectators. The parade route ended in front of the Greenbrier County courthouse where a block party, complete with face painting, sidewalk chalk, musical performances, and food from Road Hog’s Barbeque and Swift Level Fine Meats began.

Also on hand for the event were representatives of the Family Refuge Center and Seneca Health Services to provide information on suicide prevention, and other health and wellness concerns. For Seneca Health’s part, they secured the services of Batman to aid with their community outreach. Once more, the caped crusader swooped down from the rooftops to protect citizens by distributing Narcan and provided education on how one can use it to save a life.

As a scorchingly hot afternoon transitioned into a slightly-less scorchingly hot evening, an exhausted Kelsie Tyson took a few moments to speak with the West Virginia Daily News, saying, “I’m really tired, and I’m really excited. It turned out way better than we could have imagined.”

Tyson’s face was a combination of sun-kissed skin, adrenaline and fatigue. But the smile in her eyes was unmistakable.

“With this being the first Lewisburg event since COVID, and also our first Pride, after we’ve gone through a year-and-a-half of isolation, now we’re here celebrating and no more isolation,” Tyson went on to say. “Celebrating Pride and queerness, it feels like a big cyclical metaphor almost, for all of the queer-folk, and everyone in West Virginia who has felt isolated. So I’m just ending the day happy over everything.”

Tyson concluded by saying, “I can’t wait to do more.”

Tyson also wished to express her appreciation for several other area businesses and organizations for helping to make Greenbrier Valley Pride such a monumental success, including the Briergarten, West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, Alpha Music, WVSOM Center for Rural and Community Health, the Pub, Hill and Holler, Antique Autopsy, Mixed Media Jewelry, New River Community and Technical College, West Virginia Free, Fairness West Virginia and the American Civil Liberties Union of West Virginia.

Although an accurate count of event attendees was nearly impossible to calculate, the best estimate of spectators put the headcount at approximately 500 people.