

With River News Network afternoon headlines, I'm Kurt Weinschenker.

Tornadoes ripped through central Ohio... killing three people in Logan County, northwest of Columbus... according to the sheriff. Crews from the National Weather Service's Wilmington, Ohio office have gone out to assess the strength of those twisters.

Wheeling's LifeHub Winter Shelter closes for the season tomorrow. The organization seeks donations to provide year-round services for homeless individuals.

Doors at the J-B Chambers Performing Arts Center at Wheeling Park High School will open at seven tonight for "Gifted: The Docuseries"... telling the story of Wheeling native Heather Miller... and how, after her death... her organs saved lives. Cost is 15-dollars.

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Passage by the U-S House of Representatives of a bill seeking to ban the TikTok platform in the U-S due to Chinese ownership has younger users of the app upset. News 9 spoke with several students using TikTok... apparently unaware of the app's surveillance potential. Layla Lombardo.

<<sound full>>

Jefferson County Commissioners received an update on Village of Amsterdam sewer tie-ins. The Herald-Star reports Amsterdam residents will receive a bill for sewer service... even if they have not tied into the system in accordance with Ohio law. The new billing affects between one hundred-50 to two hundred customers.

President Biden doesn't like the proposed purchase of U-S Steel by Nippon Steel. Edward Laurence has the details.

<<sound full>>

Coming up on Tuesday... as a public service... the River Network presents live election coverage of the Ohio Primary... starting at eight P-M. RiverTalk hosts Steve Novotney and Dimitri will focus on local races and issues... providing news and analysis not available elsewhere. That's Tuesday on the RiverTalk stations... starting at eight P-M.

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An unhappy West Virginia Governor Jim Justice gave his weekly administration briefing Thursday... saying he plans to call the West Virginia Legislature back for a special session to fix issues with the state budget. Governor Justice described the legislative process as he saw it.

<<sound full>>

Early primary voting numbers released from the Ohio Secretary of State's office suggest a heavy Republican turn-out... spurred on by a three-way U-S Senate race... and competitive U-S House races. Compared to the 20-20 election... the G-O-P voter numbers are double this year.

A reminder... as a public service... the River Network on Tuesday night will feature live coverage of election results in the Ohio primary. Coverage begins on the RiverTalk stations at eight P-M. In Belmont County... that's 100.1 FM and 12-90 AM. In Jefferson County... tune to 100.9 FM or 14-30 A-M.

The National Parks Service has raised eyebrows with plans it has for a popular spring tourist attraction in the nation's capital. Tom Rigatti explains.

<<sound full>>

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While the tornado watch in our area expired overnight at one A-M... parts of Kentucky, Indiana, and central Ohio witnessed tornado hits. First... Carman Roberts with the big picture.

<<sound full>>

Northwest of Columbus... in Logan County... Sheriff Randy Dobbs told reporters at a press conference this morning at least three people died owing to the storms. Governor Mike DeWine plans to tour the damaged areas sometime today.

In West Virginia... Governor Jim Justice in his weekly briefing told reporters he will sign the state budget bill... but plans to call the legislature back into special session during April to fix items in it.

On Tuesday... as a public service... the River Network will broadcast live election results coverage of the Ohio Primary on the RiverTalk stations... starting at eight P-M... featuring a focus on local issues and candidates. RiverTalk broadcasts on 100.1 and 100.9 FM... as well as 12-90 and 14-30 AM.

The pilot episode of a documentary series about organ donors and donation will premiere tonight at Wheeling Park High School. Doors at the J-B Chambers Performing Arts Center will open at seven P-M for "Gifted: The Docuseries"... telling the story of Wheeling native Heather Miller... and how, after her death... her organs saved lives. Cost is 15-dollars.

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HEADLINES 3-18-24

A high-speed chase took place on Friday night spanning three states, started in Washington County, Pennsylvania, passed through West Virginia before coming to an end in Guernsey County. Law enforcement successfully used tire spikes near mile post 190 on interstate 70 to stop the pursuit. According to Sergeant Tim Cunningham of the Ohio State Highway Patrol, speeds reached up to 120 miles per hour during the chase. The driver and passenger in the vehicle were both from Pennsylvania. Scott McNary was behind the wheel and were apprehended and had outstanding warrants for their arrest. Charges are pending through the Guernsey County prosecutor's office.

This past weekend was St. Patrick's Day weekend, and in Wheeling, it was jam-packed with Celtic culture, as Oglebay Resort hosted its 3rd annual 'Shamrock Showdown.' Bagpipes, beard judging, and Guinness beer were enjoyed by hundreds of people. In the leprechaun competition, Ohio Valley men "gave it a lash," as their beards were judged on volume, style, and creativity. But the real stars of the show were the traditional Highland Games. This year's turnout had doubled in size with 30 athletes, in comparison to only 15 in 2023. Another fan favorite was Irish road bowling--a game that dates back to the 1600s. But with each activity, Banco says, came with a profound appreciation for the unique, Celtic culture.

The Harrison Central Huskies' baseball team spent their St. Patrick's Day doing a community cleanup along Route 9 from New Athens to Cadiz. Thirty baseball players - both varsity and junior high - volunteered to clean trash from the roadside as a gesture of gratitude. The team received an anonymous donation that will go towards their one-week team trip to Myrtle Beach, where they will compete in three games against local teams from that area. After receiving the donation, the team had the opportunity to give back to the community by cleaning the roadside, dedicating approximately four hours. The Huskies picked up over 50 full bags of trash by the end of their day.

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A Cambridge man has been charged with aggravated murder. In August 1990, Guernsey County authorities responded to a man trapped inside of a car that was on fire. 30-year-old James D. Bradley was pronounced dead on scene at the former Raven Cafe. The county coroner ruled his death as "natural" with "massive body burns." Yet, 34 years later, Guernsey County Sheriff Jeff Paden's investigators have discovered that the fire was not accidental. 60-year-old Carl "Butch" Hoopingartner is now being held at the Belmont County Jail.

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Several animals were rescued from a home in East Liverpool after they were found in deplorable conditions. The Columbiana County Humane Agent assisted the East Liverpool Housing Department in conducting a search warrant on the 1000 block of St. George Street following an odor complaint. Several animals were found in what was described as 'deplorable conditions,' with no vet care and severe flea infestation.

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The Weirton Transit Corporation says it is on the final leg of the dissolution process. Transit President Flora Perrone says the process of transitioning everything to the city is in last steps as they finalize legal and financial matters. Perrone says the main concern from residents remains to be service but adds that service will not be impacted. They plan to collaborate with neighboring companies like SVRTA and OVRTA to get more service and routes in the future.

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The Ja'Quan Lavender Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering youth in pursuit of their hopes and dreams. Through mentorship and partnerships, with students in middle and high school, the foundation focuses on instilling essential skills, habits of mind, leadership qualities, perseverance and more. Saturday, March 23rd will mark the 2nd annual Gold Gala Awards. It's a premier event to celebrate the community champions and their accomplishments in the Ohio Valley. The Gold Gala Awards will take place at the St. Florian Event Center in Wintersville at 5 p.m. If you're interested in attending visit Jaquan Lavender Foundation dot com.

HEADLINES 3-19-24

#1

There's a new safety initiative in place at Edison High School. Students now walk through metal detectors the minute they get off the bus. After an incident involving a weapon at the school last month, administrators quickly responded by implementing a new backpack policy and adding a metal detector, which will have students checked for potential weapons or unwanted products. Superintendent Bill Beattie said they'll pick two buses each day to spotlight. Beattie says they did their research and consulted law enforcement before purchasing the detectors, which came in at \$4200.00. Beattie says the next steps would be to get a metal detector at the front of the school for visitors to walk through.

#1

At last night's meeting, St. Clairsville's City Council announced that the St. Clairsville Junior Sports Complex will receive a \$1 million grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Recreation Director Eric Gay explained that the project will be a new entrance to the complex. Also at the meeting, the second reading of the city budget was held. A special meeting was scheduled for the budget on March 25 at 7 p.m. to meet the April 1 deadline. A DORA meeting was also scheduled for next Monday at 6 p.m. to gather public input.

#1

The Hancock County Sheriff's Office has welcomed its third K-9 addition to the force. Major is a shepherd malamute mix who joins the department's ranks after a 9-week training course that began in January in Four Oaks, N.C. Deputy Sheriff Clint Shone will be Major's handler.

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A recurring issue of water build up on U.S. 22 near the Colliers Way exit in Weirton has become a concern as water continues to rise and approach the roadway. This rising water has been a problem in recent weeks as crews first attempted to drain the median a couple of weeks ago and it has risen again to the same level. Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Assistant District Executive for Maintenance Robert C. Dean said there is a clogged culvert that PennDOT is working to unclog. There appears to be a build-up that formed in the pipe that they are working to remove. The initial attempt was unsuccessful, but a solution is still being sought. PENNDOT has no official timeline for the project.

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The Wheeling Police Department is asking for the public's help as they investigate two unrelated incidents that occurred Sunday evening. Police were called to Wheeling Hospital just after 6 p.m. for a man who self-reported to the emergency room for a gunshot wound. The victim alleges that he was struck in the head and then shot in the shoulder area. Officers investigating the incident were unable to verify the location of the incident and some information provided by the victim. The man was treated for his injury and is expected to recover. In an unrelated incident, police responded to a stabbing that allegedly happened on Lane 13 in East Wheeling around 6:55 p.m. The male victim said a person jumped out of an abandoned house and stabbed him. He described the suspect as a white male who fled the scene on a bicycle toward U.S. 250. The victim was taken to Wheeling Hospital for medical treatment by fire department personnel. Detectives worked to gather evidence and interview individuals in the area and are currently unable to verify the exact location of the crime. Anyone with information should call Wheeling Police.

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#1
The grand opening of the Brooke County Courthouse Annex will take place on March 26 -- and the public is invited to join in the celebration. The decade-long project stems from a court mandate, issued by both the Supreme Court and circuit court, urging the county to modernize its judicial facilities. Brooke County Commissioner AJ Thomas noted the new efficiency for the county's judicial system. The prosecutor's office is now in the same building as the courts and the probation department. Previously, offices were spread all over the county. The county now pays less rent, and has fewer buildings to manage. The grand opening begins at Noon on Tuesday.

#1
A Quaker City man has been charged with murder in Guernsey County. An investigation began Friday morning after deputies responded to a well-being check on a 55-year-old female at a Madison Township residence. The female was found deceased inside the residence with suspicious circumstances. Guernsey County Sheriff Jeffrey D. Paden says 32-year-old Dalton John Leach was charged Tuesday with two counts of murder with firearm specifications included. He is in the Guernsey County Jail awaiting a bond hearing in the Cambridge Municipal Court. Leach was found in the Indianapolis, Ind. area and was taken into custody on initial charges of grand theft of a motor vehicle. He waived extradition and was transported to the Guernsey County Jail on Monday.

The Sycamore Youth Center held a banquet in the Steubenville High School cafetorium on Tuesday evening. People gathered to celebrate what the youth are doing in the valley, and through the center. Sycamore Youth Center Director Bobbyjon Bauman noted that some of the Sycamore kids sang and danced, and spoke about their experiences at the center. Adults shared their experiences as well. More than 400 people, including city officials, volunteers, and families attended the banquet.

#1 + #2

More parking is coming to Water Street in Wheeling. At Tuesday's City Council meeting, it was decided to move parking during the day from the east side of Water Street to the west side. This will still allow two-way traffic, while adding additional parking spaces. The new 2-hour parking will be unmetered to coincide with the finished Streetscape Project. City Manager Robert Herron said the new parking will be enacted within the next few days -- as soon as the old meters and signs are taken down. Also during the meeting, two Wheeling Park High School teams received a proclamation from the city for the success in winning state championships. The speech and debate team won its 44th consecutive title. And the girls' basketball team finished with a record of 24-4 as state and OVAC champions.

In 2024, teens are being attracted by aggressive marketing efforts, with vaping companies facing accusations of deliberately luring in young people, contributing to a surge in adolescent vaping. Another option available to youth includes THC vapes. Hancock County Schools Superintendent Dan Enich calls vaping the district's number one discipline issue right now. Enich contacted Hancock County Sheriff Scott Gittings to discuss students possessing THC vapes. Shortly after, the department conducted a drug bust at Phillie's Quick Stop in Newell in the hopes of slowing down underage purchases of THC products. When kids get caught with a THC vape, principals typically recommend a 10-day suspension with a subsequent expulsion recommendation for the remainder of the current semester and all the next semester. The final decision on expulsion rests with the board of education. Schools are increasingly installing vape detectors to combat the rising prevalence among students. Overall, Hancock County Schools have had eight expulsions since August due to THC vaping in schools.

#2

In a partnership between the Community Foundation for the Ohio Valley and Give Belmont County, the Belmont County Enrichment Fund awarded eight organizations with thousands of dollars. The enrichment fund has been in operation since 2013 and is comprised of landowners and farmers who want to invest in the future of the county. This year had a record high of number of organizations applying for the grants. The largest gift was granted to the Barnesville State Theatre Company with \$15,000 to go toward its theatre restoration project. The second largest was to a newer program in the community - Lifewise Academy in St. Clairsville - for \$6,200. Other recipients include Brookside Volunteer Fire Department, Camp Presmont, Inc., First Christian Church, Powhatan Fire Department, R.L. Strength and Conditioning, and Young Life.

HEADLINES 3-21-24

Following a board meeting that lasted several hours ~~W~~ Wednesday, Eastern Gateway Community College approved a resolution saying if sufficient funding is not in place prior to May 31, the board would act to dissolve the college by June 30. The trustees also approved a resolution to begin negotiations with Youngstown State University to explore collaboration options. This story is still developing.

Renovations will begin soon at the Steubenville Municipal Building. A \$2 million interior renovation project is being put into areas the police use along with some other office areas. Christian Schessler, with McKinley Architecture and Engineering out of Wheeling, has been working on designs. Fort Steuben is the contractor. Upgrades will focus mainly on the police department. They will include new evidence storage spaces, upgrades to locker rooms, bathrooms, and exercise room and even security improvements - all which have not been upgraded for many years. Additional renovations also include the main corridor and enhancements to ensure handicap accessibility for the public restrooms. Second Ward Councilman Tracy McManamon said project is a collaborative effort with city council and the municipal court for the funding. Council has also had this in its 2023-24 budget, but it is also looking for grant money.

Yesterday was Community Day at Steubenville High School, and students spent the entire day on projects for the community. Students in grades 9 to 12 took part in the event, with approximately 700 teenagers coming together to spread happiness and make a positive impact. Students read books to elementary students, prepared peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for The Friendship Room, crafted homemade dog treats and blankets for the animal shelter, visited a nursing home, and other acts of kindness. Students not only extended acts of kindness to their community, but also to their fellow classmates and teachers within their own school. They distributed positive notes on every student's locker, assembled stress relief packages, and also crafted hygiene bags.

The city of Toronto and neighboring communities gathered Wednesday to honor Chris Decker and retired Toronto firefighter Larry Mosti at the J.E. Foster Funeral Home. Decker died in a motorcycle accident in Savannah, Ga. where he served as a master sergeant at Georgia Southern. He was an Army master sergeant, and played football, wrestled and was on the Edison track team. Decker also was an Army ranger and was deployed 11 times into combat. He earned multiple medals and honors in the Army, including a Bronze Star. Decker was escorted from Pittsburgh International Airport to Toronto. Mosti served 41 years as a volunteer firefighter and 36 years as a TEMS volunteer ambulance service driver. Mosti became a career firefighter in 1996. He retired after 28 years of service.

It's been more than a month since the announcement came out that the Weirton Cleveland-Cliffs tin mill would be idled. And now an idling date of April 15 has been set. While many say this is the end of steel, USW Local 2911 President Mark Glyptis said this isn't the end and is just a pause on production. He said Cliffs has offered employees jobs at facilities all across the United States and if production commences in Weirton they can return to the mill. Glyptis said while they are fighting for an overturning of the ruling from the ITC, they continue to educate steelworkers on their pensions and 401Ks as many look to what's next.

The Follansbee Chamber of Commerce unveiled its 2024 calendar Wednesday. Members were able to see the different business events, legislative summits, education summits as well as many community events. All these different events will help businesses network and grow which is the goal of the chamber. The chamber's volunteer president, Eric Fithyan, said the calendar helps the chamber be one-on-one and support the businesses.

Crews have been fighting an active brush fire spanning two counties over two states. The fire is hitting parts of Marshall County in West Virginia, as well as Greene County in Pennsylvania. Marshall, Wetzel and Greene county officials are on scene. Marshall County EMA Director Tom Hart said no injuries have been reported but the wind is making containing the fire difficult.

A West Virginia House bill that would remove vaccination requirements for students in virtual schools and would allow private and parochial schools to set their own standards still has yet to be decided. Governor Jim Justice said he hasn't decided whether to sign or reject House Bill 5105. It's been a major topic of debate, with many health professionals urging a veto and others wanting passage for personal freedom.

HEADLINES 3-22-24

2

The College of St. Joseph the Worker in Steubenville has been reviewing applications for its first round of students. The college received 130 applicants but CAN only accept 30. According to founder and vice president of finance Jacob Imam, about 30% of the accepted applications were from students in the tri-state area. Imam said the application process was extremely competitive, and during review, multiple items were examined, like academic promise, the applicant's experience in skilled trades, and personal, spiritual and life goals. Imam said the accepted students who will have the opportunity to be a part of the inaugural class were notified on Monday. The college will now have to wait to receive its accreditation after its first class graduates. The College of St. Joseph the Worker offers multiple skilled trades like carpentry, HVAC, plumbing, electrical and more, and the hope is for class sizes to grow to at least 100 over time. Classes are expected to start for students on Sept. 25.

2

On Wednesday, it was learned that board members approved a resolution to potentially dissolve Eastern Gateway Community College. The resolution said if sufficient funding is not in place prior to May 31, the board would act to dissolve the college by June 30. The trustees also approved a resolution to begin negotiations with Youngstown State University to explore collaboration options. But what about the levy Jefferson County taxpayers pay that goes to the college? Commissioner Dave Maple said that the voters will decide whether to renew the levy, but it's not known what they will be renewing. Maple also said the prosecutor's office and the auditor's office have been meeting to figure out what can be done. And Maple noted that a decision to dissolve has not yet been made, so he believes those funds are still being used in the way they always were.

2

We told you earlier this week that a pond had formed in the median of U.S. Route 22 east of Weirton. Today, crews were out clearing a pipe and working to drain the impromptu pond from the median. PENNDOT officials said a clogged culvert was responsible for the ponding.

#1
A Monroe County man is behind bars facing child pornography charges. The sheriff's office was alerted by Internet Crimes Against Children last week of possible child pornography being uploaded/downloaded by a resident. A search warrant was obtained and executed at a Lewisville home, leading to the arrest of 22-year-old Troy A. Klutts. Klutts told Monroe County Sheriff's detectives that he did obtain, download, and save videos of young children engaging in sexual acts. He was arrested and is facing 10 counts of pandering of sexual orienting material. His bond was set at \$50,000 bond. During the investigation, it was also learned that Klutts had attempted to become a foster parent and has babysat for young children. Monroe County detectives are investigating complaints and concerns that have since been reported to the sheriff's office and are analyzing digital evidence.

#1
The city of Wheeling has declared a new spot for a homeless camp site, as others are set to close. A 14-day notice to shut down has been posted by the West Virginia Division of Highways at the temporary 18th Street camp site. And with the closure of the Winter Freeze Shelter as well, the homeless population is in need of a place to settle. The new location will be at what they call the "Maintenance Trail" in East Wheeling. An access road to the area has been built and signs are posted. On Wednesday, there was a meeting with the city and homeless advocates to start getting the site ready. The homeless campsite will be open in the next few weeks.

#1
The Ohio State Highway Patrol is investigating a two-vehicle fatal crash that happened earlier this week in Carroll County. The patrol said 71-year-old Patrick Snow was taken from the scene on County Road 10 to Aultman Hospital in Canton, where he was pronounced dead. The other driver was also taken to a Canton hospital with a serious injury. Troopers said a vehicle went left of center and hit snow's van. The crash remains under investigation.

HEADLINES 3-25-24

The Ja'Quan Lavender Foundation held its second annual Gold Gala in Steubenville over the weekend, recognizing those who give back, and serve as role models for the youth in the community. The foundation focuses on middle and high school age kids teaching them life skills, perseverance, and essential qualities and showing them their value in society. This year's keynote speaker was LaShawn Merrit, a three time Olympic gold medalist that was a training partner to Ja'Quan.

In 2021, Steubenville Municipal Court was certified through the Ohio Supreme Court to create the Steubenville Municipal Mental Health Court. This is a court-supervised, intensive case management program for individuals who have been diagnosed with a mental illness and it has contributed to being involved in the criminal justice system. The program the courtroom of Judge John Mascio has been offering to the community for three years has been rewarding. So far, 62 defendants have been referred. Referrals to the program can happen in any step in the court proceeding and can be done by the judge, defense attorney, prosecutor, police, jail staff, etc. In the program, participants receive treatment and support services. The program is considered to be a term of probation for the majority of the offenders. With that, they are expected to be fully compliant. There are four phases to the program and each phase has set goals. The program has received several grants through the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. So, it operates at no cost to the city of Steubenville.

The Wheeling YMCA hosted a unique floating Easter egg hunt for local families over the weekend. Children splashed around the pool at the Wheeling YMCA's annual Easter egg hunt. The event had 90 children registered. There were two sessions: one for kids aged 6 and under, and another for those aged seven to 10. After collecting the eggs, the children were able to switch them out for a goodie bag. There was also face painting, balloon animals, and of course, the Easter Bunny made an appearance.

#2
West Virginia has the highest rate of adult cigarette use in the nation, and it became the 12th state to ban smoking in vehicles with children present under a bill signed by Republican Gov. Jim Justice. But smoking with children present cannot be the main reason a driver is stopped. Violators can only be fined up to \$25 if they're pulled over for another offense. The bill originated in the Republican-dominated state Senate, whose majority leader, Tom Takubo, is a lung doctor. Takubo has said he made a promise long ago to a patient whose father was a heavy smoker that he would try to get such legislation passed. Takubo has made it almost an annual effort since 2017 to introduce the legislation.

#1
Jefferson County Schools have been adapting to new safety measures throughout the year, but one that is proving to be successful in all schools is the new SaferWatch program. Steubenville High School Assistant Principal Deanna Beall says all teachers and staff at their schools have been trained, with each wearing a lanyard equipped with a safety button, and if there is an emergency, the teacher can press the lanyard and it communicates effectively with the police department, with police being on site during test runs within seconds. Other schools are watching the program take shape, with not just those safety lanyards but also cameras that connect to the 911 center. Educators say safety is always top of mind and it's something they continue to collaborate on in the future.

It's called Love Your Neighborhood, and the city of Wheeling is again encouraging residents to improve their communities, as funding for the mini-grant program has been approved. Thirty-thousand dollars is set to be distributed among the wards in the Friendly City to make improvements, like adding green space to vacant lots or sprucing things up with public art. Each ward will be able to receive up to \$5,000, but if one ward doesn't get any requests, its money will be given to other areas. Wheeling City Clerk Jessica Zalenski said they're looking groups of at least three members of a neighborhood to come together and spearhead each project. The application process will take place throughout the spring, closing in June. For an application or more info, visit Wheeling, WV, dot gov.

A fire at the Eagle Hollow Apartments in Marshall County sent one person to the hospital. The Limestone Volunteer Fire Department says the call for a fire came in at around 10 pm Saturday night. Two apartment buildings were affected, one seeing fire damage and the other water damage. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

HEADLINES 3-26-34

#1

At Monday evening's board of education meeting, Ohio County Schools Superintendent Kim Miller's contract was renewed. She has served in the role for eight years. The renewal was approved by the board for another four years because of the progress they say has been made under her leadership. Also at the meeting, some of the few changes discussed were different dates for breaks. More information about the calendar can be found on the board of education website in the coming days.

#2

Brooke High School will be getting new a plumbing system. This project will include the entire high school and with it will come new toilets, urinals, sinks and showers in the locker rooms. Superintendent Jeffrey Crook said the project will received \$6.2 million dollars from the school building authority. Crook said the project will be completed in sections, so as to cause minimal disruption to the students' school days. The project is expected to take 1-3 years.

#1

One person was arrested after an early morning vehicle pursuit that began in Wheeling ended in Marshall County. The Wheeling Police Department was called to the 2500 block of Eoff Street around 1:45 for an initial welfare check. When the officers arrived, 29-year-old Evan Fisher left the area in a car and fled through the Center Wheeling area, south on Route 2 for several miles, and ending on Fisher's Lane outside the McMechen city limits. Wheeling Police, joined by several other law enforcement agencies, were able to locate Fisher and take him into custody. He was arrested and charged with one count of felony fleeing in a vehicle and taken to the Northern Regional Jail pending a court arraignment.

#2

The weather doesn't always show it, but summer is approaching, and a new addition has been made to Friendship Park in Smithfield, Ohio, aimed at enhancing inclusivity and accessibility for all park users. Installed is a new handicap-accessible kayak boat launch, funded by the Jefferson County Commissioners through their ARPA funds. On May 18th at 11 AM, there will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Friendship Park to celebrate the new addition.

#1

Bethlehem Apostolic Church in Wheeling is prepping for its annual giveaway for those in need. Saturday marks the 33rd Easter Food Basket Giveaway to provide families across the Ohio Valley an opportunity to celebrate. It started as a local event but has grown to a tri-state area effort sporting hundreds of families. Bishop Darrell Cummings said there are a number of community agencies that work with the church each year. Hams, meats, canned goods, fruits, vegetables, and clothing will be handed out, first-come, first-serve at the Dream Center at 807 Main Street at 11 a.m. on Saturday. This week, Cummings is also hosting a stuff-the-bus at Reisbeck's in Elm Grove from 4-6 p.m. on Wednesday for those who would like to support the giveaway.

#2

Weirton City Council approved the city budget for 2024 to 2025 on Monday with minimal changes for some of the city's organizations. Some of the major changes for the budget this year include funding for the city building and other improvements that will directly impact residents. An ongoing project in the city that residents will see continued updates on is Starvaggi Memorial Pool. It is scheduled to undergo a complete rehab of the pool vessel, which includes some of the surrounding buildings and showers. This will address issues that the pool has been dealing with for decades. Work there has already begun and will be supported by additional funding for the project included in the budget decision. City Attorney Vincent Gurrera said at least \$70,000 will be put into pool upgrades.

HEADLINES 3-27-24

At Tuesday evening's Steubenville City Council meeting, an ordinance requesting the city manager or parks and recreation director to advertise for bids for phase one of the Belleview Pool rehabilitation project passed following a 5-0 vote. Councilman Michael Herson called the project the number one priority for kids and families for the summer. Third Ward Councilwoman Heather Hoover and Councilman At-Large Joel Walker were not present to take part in the vote.

The Market Street Bridge has been closed since December and local officials are pushing for potential grant funding to replace the bridge. Brooke Hancock Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission Executive Director Mike Paprocki is among them. Paprocki says there have been discussions with the U.S. Department of Transportation over their application for the Bridge Investment Program. Each state is guaranteed at least one project out of the program. Paprocki says to replace the Market Street Bridge, the cost would be between \$80-\$85 million. Paprocki says any project of this size could take about 8-10 years.

Five bids for environmental remediation and demolition have been received for the Wheeling Gateway project. The former Wheeling Inn site received offers ranging from just over \$400,000 to \$988,000. Two out of the five companies are based in the Ohio Valley. Wheeling-Ohio County CVB Executive Director Frank O'Brien said getting the job done right is their top priority, not the cost. The location of the building makes for a delicate playing field. To prevent damage to the suspension bridge, vibration monitors may have to be used during construction. Officials say demolition should begin this summer.

#2

Two people were arrested overnight and are facing criminal charges by the Wheeling Police Department. Wheeling Police say they were called to the 200 block of South Broadway Street on Wheeling Island for a fight between two people and a single gunshot being heard inside an apartment. Police say no one was hurt due to the shot being fired. Wheeling Police say they obtained a warrant for the apartment where officers located a large amount of illegal drugs, ammunition and one spent shell casing. 36-year old Brittany Lea Foster of Wheeling is charged with being a prohibited person from possessing a firearm and possession with intent to deliver. 35-year old Roland Nathaniel Copney of Wheeling is facing charges of wanton endangerment and possession with intent to deliver.

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Brooke County officials showed off the brand-new Brooke County Courthouse annex yesterday afternoon. The \$12.4 million project had been under construction since early 2022 -- and in planning stages for much longer. The ceremony included officials from local government who say the three-story, 32,000 square-foot addition represents a major step forward. The annex is modern with a focus on convenience and efficiency. It's also host to a number of safety measures that ensure maximum security for anyone inside, for instance, there are private elevators, and a separate entrance for prisoners. The \$12.4 million project is the first of its kind in the state of West Virginia that is funded through municipal building bonds.

The Public Library of Steubenville and Jefferson County is bringing a new season of StoryWalks for families to read together. Readers can head to Steubenville's 4th Street, where the library has teamed with the city's egg-sibition to follow the book pages of "The Golden Egg" by A.J. Wood, on the life-sized eggs through town. Or they can visit Beatty Park, where their StoryWalk will feature "The Spring Visitors" by Karel Hayes. Kids win a prize at the main library when they are finished reading. Treasure maps to guide kids and their families are available at the main library, Bookmarx Books, and Leonardo's Coffeehouse. The StoryWalk on 4th street will last until April 14, while Beatty Park's closes in October. Library Public Relations Coordinator Jennifer Cesta says Toronto residents can expect a StoryWalk near the public pool in July, and more StoryWalks are in the works in the Rayland and Dillonvale communities for later this summer.

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The Wheeling Police Department issued a possible overdose trend or spike alert on Wednesday. This is the second overdose alert issued in March. The last overdose alert was issued on March 9. The alert is in effect for the next 48-96 hours. Police advise that Narcan is available at the Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. These alerts are enacted when at least three overdoses are recorded within a day or two and within the same geographical region.



Weirton Medical Center to join WVU Medicine

Posted on 3/27/2024

WEIRTON, W.Va. – Officials at Weirton Medical Center (<https://www.weirtonmedical.com/>) (WMC) announced that the hospital has signed a letter of intent to affiliate further with the West Virginia University Health System by becoming a full-member of the Health System. WMC became a clinical affiliate of WVU Medicine in 2020 (<https://wvumedicine.org/news-feed/news-article/WVU-Medicine/Ruby-Memorial-Hospital/weirton-medical-center-enters-into-clinical-program-collaboration-agreement-with-wvu-medicine/>).

“Since beginning our clinical partnership with WVU Medicine (<https://www.wvumedicine.org>) in 2020, they continued to be nationally recognized for the delivery of world-class medicine and groundbreaking research. This affiliation with the WVU Health System is just the next phase in our continued growth at WMC, providing patients with expanded access to WVU Medicine specialists and advanced medical care right in their community,” John Frankovitch, WMC president and CEO, said.

“The partnership is not just an affiliation but a community investment on the part of WMC and WVU Medicine. In addition to the exceptional medical care we provide, WMC has a significant economic impact on the region with over 1,400 employees. Our partnership with WVU Medicine ensures WMC will continue for the next generation, providing the exceptional, compassionate healthcare our patients have come to expect.”



Weirton Medical Center

The WVU Health System, which operates under the brand name WVU Medicine, is West Virginia’s largest network of hospitals, clinics, and specialty institutes with more than 3,000 licensed beds, 4,000 providers, and 30,000 employees. An 881-bed, Magnet-recognized academic medical center in Morgantown, West Virginia anchors the network of 24 hospitals and clinics.

“The addition of Weirton Medical Center will bolster our efforts to ensure the residents of the northern-most counties in the state have access to world-class healthcare without having to leave home,” Albert L. Wright, Jr. (<https://wvumedicine.org/about/leadership-and-more/leadership/>), president and CEO of the WVU Health System, said. “We laid the groundwork in 2020 with our clinical affiliation and remain impressed with both the hospital and the growth opportunities it will present as a full member of our network. We look forward to expanding our collaboration even further.”

WMC is a 238-bed acute care hospital located on U.S. Route 22 in West Virginia’s Northern Panhandle. Serving patients from West Virginia, eastern Ohio, and Western Pennsylvania, WMC operates over 50 ancillary locations throughout the tri-state region. It is one of the largest employers in northern West Virginia.

WMC and WVU Medicine will begin the approval process with a target affiliation date of January 1, 2025.

For media inquiries:

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#1

The Wheeling Police Department is adding a component to its Crisis Response System in partnership with First Choice Services. FCS is a non-profit based out of Charleston that provides helpline services for mental health and substance use. The partnership has been implemented for a while, working on crisis intervention training. Now it has added a peer recovery support specialist to be based at the Wheeling police station and help with mental health and substance use calls. That specialist will be Erica Biggers. Biggers has been in recovery since 2019 and has worked in behavioral health and substance use services in Wheeling. Wheeling Police Chief Shawn Schwertfeger said Biggers will be activated by Wheeling police officers in the case of an overdose, she may be activated by Wheeling police officers in the field, she may receive referrals from Wheeling PD based on an observation or encounters they had, and she will be in outreach efforts

#1

The Ohio State Highway Patrol is investigating a two-vehicle crash around 4 o'clock in Harrison County on Thursday afternoon. The crash involved a car and a pickup truck at the intersection of U.S. 250 and C.R. 68. The driver of the car was transported by medical helicopter to Akron General Hospital, where they were listed in stable condition with non-life-threatening injuries. The driver of the truck was uninjured.

#1

The Jefferson County Engineering Department presented its annual report to the Jefferson County commissioners on Thursday, calling it a "banner year." Among their accomplishments: More than 100 road slips repaired; 15.39 miles of road resurfacing; three bridge replacements; and miles and miles of spot paving. Longtime County Engineer Jim Branagan says 2023 was a year of growth and success, and he noted that a lot of the success was due to the people behind the scenes.

#2

Drivers who travel the Veterans Memorial Bridge between Steubenville and Weirton were happy when the lanes opened altogether in both directions in January after more than a year of work. Well, construction along the Bridge will resume Monday. Now, there will be lane closures in both directions. The West Virginia Division of Highways say the bridge maintenance should continue through the end of May. Drivers are advised to follow work zone speed limits.

#2

The New Cumberland Locks and Dam has long been a vital asset for navigation. Now, recognizing the potential for sustainable energy generation, plans have been set in motion to integrate a new hydro power plant into the existing structure. The New Cumberland hydroelectric facility is expected to be up and running at the end of 2027. This will be a 20-megawatt hydro powerplant. This development marks a significant step toward cleaner energy production and underscores the importance of utilizing renewable resources. By leveraging the natural flow of the Ohio River, this project aims to generate electricity while minimizing environmental impact. The construction phase is estimated to span two years, during which it is anticipated that 200-300 local individuals will be employed. Following commissioning, the operational phase will require a permanent staff of 10 employees to manage ongoing activities. It's expected to power 15,000 homes.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month and local government officials will help focus attention on a social problem that impacts communities across the country. Jefferson County Job and Family Services Director Michelle Santin says numbers are down concerning physical abuse and children born into drugs. But, child neglect numbers are up, which makes the message so important to get out. A windmill planting to spotlight awareness will take place in honor of National Child Abuse Prevention Month on April 8.

#2

Work on the Moundsville City Building has come to a halt, as its contracting company has filed for bankruptcy. PCS & Build LLC., out of Cleveland, filed with Ohio Northern Bankruptcy Court this week. Moundsville City Manager Rick Healy said the city is working with attorneys and bond companies to try and resolve things as quickly as possible.