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'A conservation emergency'

Donor to match pledges to save 2,770 acres at New River Gorge National Park

By Riley McCoy
THE REGISTER-HERALD

BECKLEY — Raleigh County residents have until June 30 to make their pledges to protect 2,770 acres adjacent to New River Gorge National Park.

An anonymous donor has offered to match eligible pledges dollar for dollar — up to \$25,000 with a \$5,000 per-

son limit — as the nonprofit Arc of Appalachia prepares to bid on eight tracts of land at a public auction at Tamarack on June 30 at 11 a.m.

Although the property directly borders the National Park, it lies outside the Park's federally-authorized boundaries, which prevents the National Park Service from purchasing the land without congressional approval.

Based in Bainbridge, Ohio, Arc of Appalachia hopes to acquire and permanently protect as much of the property as possible, including land that could help connect Beckley, Piney Creek Gorge and the New River Gorge region through future trails and conservation corridors.

Mitch Lehman, director of Outdoor Economic Development for the City of Beck-

ley, explained how a critical parcel known as Stretcher's Neck fits into the larger strategic endeavor to connect the gorge with the city.

"Between the West Virginia Land Trust, Piney Creek Preserve, and the National Park boundary is a tract of land known as Stretcher's Neck," Lehman said. "That is kind of the critical link that is missing that would allow

us to create a soft-surface trail that connects from the Piney Creek Preserve all the way to the National Park."

Lehman urges the public to come out and participate because of the rare opportunity to connect foot traffic from Beckley to the New River National Park.

"What this connection would allow people to do is to get on soft-surface trails

EMERGENCY » 3A

Fine dining returns to Oak Hill

New River Tavern and Bistro owners transform White Oak Country Club

By Micah M. Mocnik
FOR THE REGISTER-HERALD

OAK HILL — Fine dining can be hard to come by in southern West Virginia, where drive-thrus and fast-food restaurants dominate much of the landscape.

At 1206 Summerlee Road in Oak Hill, the New River Tavern and Bistro aims to offer something different — a place where diners can slow down, enjoy the scenery and settle in for a carefully prepared meal.

Located in the former White Oak Country Club, the restaurant is owner Alan Greenstein's effort to revive a building with a long history while filling what he sees as a gap in the region's dining scene.

Greenstein said people repeatedly told him they could not find a good steak or high-quality meal nearby without traveling elsewhere. His answer is a family-friendly restaurant that

DINING » 3A



Riley McCoy/The Register-Herald

Nearly a dozen students completed the Beckley Police Department's Junior Police Academy, a one-week youth program, on Thursday at 1:30 p.m., at Beckley Police Department headquarters.

New cadets hit the street

Beckley Police Department's Junior Police Academy graduates 10 youths

By Riley McCoy
THE REGISTER-HERALD

BECKLEY — A youth outreach program is finally old enough to hire its graduates.

Byrce Covey, currently a patrolman with the Beckley Police Department, is the first former Junior Police Academy participant to return to the department as an officer.

"It obviously motivated me more to do this job," Covey said.

He's been with the department since October. Covey's story provided a reflective atmosphere for the nearly dozen students who completed the one-week youth academy on June 25.

The free program introduces students to law enforcement basics, emergency response, CPR, Stop the Bleed training and courtroom procedure. Lt. John Wall, director of the Junior Academy, said the training is held at the police department and gives students a closer look at police work through classes, demonstrations and practical

"Every public school in Raleigh County has Stop the Bleed kits, so if there's an emergency at school, these students already know, 'Hey, this is the kit. This is what we need to do.'"

Lt. John Wall, director of the Junior Police Academy

safety training.

Wall said Covey's hiring shows the academy has reached a point where its earliest students are old enough to return as officers.

"We actually just had this conversation a few minutes ago about hiring the first officer in our department that was in the very first class we had," Wall said.

"We're getting to a point where we are starting to get some of the students that were in these classes to the age where we can hire."

Police Chief Dean R. Bailey said Covey is an example of the program's long-term value.

Covey said he attended the academy about 10 years ago and remembered demonstrations and ride-alongs from the earlier version of the program. He said it taught him "respect" and character-

ized the Academy as "a great thing." Covey said the academy helped him see the big picture of law enforcement.

"I've seen both sides of it," Covey said. "It's really helped me a lot."

Wall said the academy is now in its eighth year under his stewardship and that another class is scheduled for July 13-16.

Bailey said the department also offers a Citizens Police Academy in the fall for adults, meeting one night a week for about 10 weeks.

Bryce Meador, 14, completed the Junior Police Academy for the third time on Thursday.

An eighth grader moving from Beckley Stratton Middle School to Woodrow Wilson High, Meador has been interested in law enforcement and public service for a long time.

"For me personally, law enforcement in general has always been like, public service," Meador said. "I've always wanted to do it."

Meador said the academy gives students a clear look at a career path they may not otherwise see.

"It's a really fun program," Covey said. "They do a lot of fun things, specifically based around children, to try to get them to see a career pathway to law enforcement."

"We normally start off with the 911 Center, where all basically just about all police work starts," Wall said. "Where it's dispatched from the dispatchers to the officers, then we try and grow from there and go through the process of what it's like in a typical day for an officer."

From there, Wall said, students learn about domestic violence, juvenile alcohol and drug abuse, defensive tactics and courtroom procedure. The academy also includes a mock trial in circuit court, where students witness the roles of prosecutors, defense attorneys,

CADETS » 3A

Probe of Kanawha Falls PSD begins

By Riley McCoy
THE REGISTER-HERALD

FAYETTEVILLE — Kanawha Falls Public Service District is facing scrutiny after regulators claim years of management and environmental failures.

In a June 23 order, the Public Service Commission opened a general investigation and directed staff to seek a receivership, presumed to be American Water Co., for the district through a Fayette County Circuit Court petition.

The order followed PSC staff allegations that the district may be unable or unwilling to serve customers and came weeks after the Department of Environmental Protection filed an enforcement lawsuit that claims

PSD » 3A

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