



Message from the director . . .

Extolling the virtues of the wonderful clubs, classrooms, troops and others who make up the Youth Environmental Program is a regular occurrence of mine.

So, it's extra special when those outside our circle take notice. That's why we decided to re-run a recent newspaper editorial from The Inter-Mountain of Elkins. The editorial highlights the accomplishments of the YEP and offers a hearty "thank you"



Annette Hoskins
YEP Director

for all the remarkable work this organization is doing.

It is acknowledgements such as this that helps us understand how important our efforts are to West Virginia, its citizens and the environment.

And while we don't need accolades for inspiration to do what is right, an occasional pat on the back sure is nice.

So, keep doing what you're doing – making our state a better place to live and work. I promise people are noticing, even if they don't always say it.

* * *

Mark your calendars for November 8-10, dates for this year's Youth Environmental Conference at beautiful Blackwater Falls State Park.

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YEP earning respect

Editor's Note: This editorial first appeared in *The (Elkins) Inter-Mountain*. It is being reprinted with permission.

While some older Mountain State residents are worrying about ways to avoid leaving the planet in shambles for future generations, plenty of younger residents are already doing something about it. They were honored for their efforts during the 2024 Youth Environmental Day at North Bend State Park this spring.

West Virginia's Youth Environmental Program is not a recent creation. The first event was held back in May 1964 at Holly River State Park. Since then, the annual event has moved to North Bend, and has become a showcase of the work being done by young people through their environmental and conservation projects.

According to the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, groups enrolled in YEP collected 875 bags of trash over the past year. They recycled more than 9,000 pounds of aluminum, 62,000 pounds of plastic, 100,000 pounds of steel and 80,000 pounds of paper. They also planted more than 500 trees and cleaned trash from 210 miles of roadways, in addition to community areas and streams.

WVDEP says those young people and their organizations accumulated volunteer hours that equaled an estimated savings of \$11.3 million for the state.

Makes you take a look at what you have done lately, doesn't it?



Members of the the Hillbillies 4-H Club display their parade hats at this year's Youth Day.

For more photos

Scan this QR code to see the list of 2024 Youth Environmental Program Award winners, along with photos.



Certainly, YEP participants don't have to wonder. They know they are doing good things for their state and planet. For that, we say not only congratulations, but thank you!

Youth Conference scheduled for Nov. 8-10

An educational and fun-filled weekend is being planned for this year's Youth Environmental Conference at Blackwater Falls State Park in Tucker County.

The 48th annual event is scheduled for November 8-10 and is open to youth, ages 13-18.

The conference kicks off on Friday afternoon. Tentative activities include hiking, arts and crafts and environmental education starting at 5 p.m.

After dinner, which begins at 7 p.m., youth groups attending have the option to give a

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Conference registration

Scan this QR code for information about this year's Youth Conference, as well as a registration link.



News from the YEP districts

District 1

JoAnn Snoderly
District Coordinator



BARRACKVILLE Middle School science teacher and STEM Club advisor Amelia Mullens has always tried to instill an appreciation for nature and environmental protection in her students, covering a variety of environmental topics in the classroom, YEP participation, and overseeing students in a school-wide recycling and recycling education program.

After nearly two years of planning and fundraising, this mission went beyond the walls of the school. In June, students and chaperones went on a summer tour featuring Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon and Zion national parks, with stops at notable outdoor locations in between.

The trip fostered an even stronger appreciation for the outdoors among the school's youth.

"Our kids gained so much on this trip. They got to see firsthand how water can carve rock



into enormous canyons, how animals adapt to human interference, how important it is to pack out what you pack in. From hoodoos to sand dunes to rivers, our kids fell in love with the power of Mother Nature," Mullens said.

For others considering a similar trip, Mullens said the work is worth it, but planning ahead is key to allow time for fundraising.

In the meantime, YEP participants aged 13-18 can consider attending the Youth Environmental Conference this fall, where they can fall in love with the beautiful outdoors in and around Blackwater Falls State Park.

District 3

Beth Henry-Vance
District Coordinator



I was excited to participate in the 2024 Buckhannon Riverfest, where more than 100 people of all ages enjoyed kayaking and paddling on a beautiful August day.

The eighth annual event featured educational stations, music, crafts and free children's programs. It was presented by the Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance and the Buckhannon River Watershed Association.

Two other WVDEP employees and I offered hands-on activities and information about Save Our Streams, Make It Shine, Adopt-A-Highway and the Youth Environmental Program.

Callie Cronin-Sams, Save Our Streams coordinator, displayed live benthic macroinvertebrates such as mayfly and stonefly larvae. These tiny creatures are highly sensitive to pollution, and they're a good indicator of stream health.

Northern Basin Watershed

Coordinator Martin Christ displayed topographic watershed maps, along with clay that children could form into mountains and river valleys.

My display included a giant board game, where children pretended to be brook trout and learned about environmental impacts to fish habitat.

If your group is interested in these activities, please let us know! The WVDEP hosts educational outreach activities at schools and community events year-round.

You can request presentations from Youth Environmental Program coordinators by visiting www.dep.wv.gov and entering "YEP" in the search bar.

For Watershed Improvement Branch information, including Save Our Streams events, visit the DEP website and enter "WIB" in the search bar.

District 2

Susan Carroll
District Coordinator



DID you know it is estimated that 30-40% of the American food supply is wasted? That's almost half of your pizza going straight into the trash.

The start of the school year is a perfect time to conduct a food audit in your school cafeteria or at home. Document how much and what kind of foods go into the trash each day. You'll be surprised at what you see!

Many schools are working to minimize food waste and offer "share carts." If an item is unwanted by one student, prepackaged and unopened, it can go directly onto the cart for another student to have. Maybe one muffin just wasn't enough for breakfast this morning, go to the share cart and enjoy two!

Students can also speak with the cafeteria staff to discuss why some types of food are wasted so much. Perhaps if it is presented sliced instead of whole, it would be consumed more frequently.



Romney Elementary recently took on composting some of its cafeteria's food waste. Student council volunteers oversee the collection bin to make sure the right food items go in, then the bin is carried to the compost pile in the school garden to be turned and managed to produce soil that can be used for school plantings. If you are interested in starting some of these programs, check out the world wildlife website, which offers up Food Warrior lesson plans, posters and activities. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/>

District 4

Sara Prior
District Coordinator



HELLO from Fayette County! I am incredibly happy to be returning to the YEP as your District 4 coordinator.

For those of you who don't know me, I have dedicated my career to youth outreach and environmental education. I spent almost seven years working as a park ranger for the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve (before it became a national park) and in 2014 I started working for the YEP, where I spent many wonderful years assisting youth groups across southern West Virginia.

Most recently, I gained valuable skills as a 4-H extension educator with West Virginia State University and then returned to the DEP in 2023 to become the Southern Basin coordinator for the Watershed Improvement Branch.

I love the outdoors and spending time exploring nature with my family. I'm lucky to have my

husband, Ben, by my side to help coordinate our busy lives. We have two children and a dog, Willa. Ava is in middle school and plays soccer for the Fayetteville Pirates. My youngest, Eli, loves hockey and plays for the West Virginia Wild 10U team out of Charleston.

When we are not at sporting events, we enjoy playing outside! Whether it's a mountain bike ride, fishing the New River, exploring a hiking trail, or rock climbing, we find beauty in every adventure we take.

If you're in Clay, Fayette, Greenbrier, McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Raleigh, Summers, or Wyoming county, please reach out with any questions or just to say hi.

One last thing, I'm going to miss Tom Aluise when he retires! Cheers to memories of working together and a lifelong friendship.

District 5

Tom Aluise
District Coordinator



EVERYONE strives to find a job that is rewarding.

Some succeed. Some fail.

Those who succeed, like me, are profoundly fortunate. But there is a downside. Eventually, that “rewarding” job will end.

And so it is that my tenure as the District 5 coordinator for the Youth Environmental Program comes to a close on October 31.

I am venturing into the land of retirement, excited about new adventures on the horizon, yet a bit anxious about the unknown that lurks in the shadows of my 60s.

It has been an amazing and unforgettable 10 years with the YEP, mostly because of you and the wonderfully talented people I work alongside.

I am convinced our state’s Youth Environmental Program and its accomplishments would stand tall against any in the country.

How could it not? We have a winning formula in place, starting

with the program’s innovative director, Annette Hoskins, and filtering down through our sharp district coordinators to you, the tireless school teachers, 4-H leaders, scout troop leaders, homeschool moms and dads and other adult mentors who care passionately about this beautiful state.

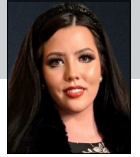
And, of course, there’s the kids. They are the best part of the YEP and why we’re all doing what we do. They hold our state’s future in their hands.

Those same hands planted more than 500 trees last year and picked up 875 bags of trash. Their volunteer hours saved millions of dollars for the state.

I’d like to think I played at least a small part in all of that. I’d like to think in my 10 years of service to the YEP I changed some young minds about the environment. I’ll miss that mission. And all of you.

District 6

Brooke Hinzman
District Coordinator



DOZENS witnessed clean energy firsts at a Pleasants County landmark this summer.

In an August demonstration to local, state and federal leaders, officials representing the Omnis Energy and Pleasants Power Station exhibited pilot technology with the ability to eliminate emissions during the production of energy.

During the demonstration multiple global firsts were recorded, notably including the first production of hydrogen with net zero greenhouse gas emissions and the first immediate conveyance of hydrogen into a power plant to generate power. As noted in the St. Marys Oracle, other firsts included the first hydrogen production with “economics comparable to fossil fuels,” the first production of Quantum H2 through the reforming of hydrocarbons and the initial demonstration of “commercially viable, high-temperature Pyrolysis” through

the use of the Quantum Reformer.

Omnis, which officially took possession of the Pleasants Power Station in August 2023, aims to use Ultra-High Temperature Omnis Quantum Pyrolysis technology to produce clean-burning hydrogen and high-grade graphite by heating hydrocarbons up to 3,600 degrees celsius. With the Pleasants County location being the first of its kind, the company plans to retrofit existing power plants with its hydrogen burners in order to enable the clean burning of the substance and “eliminating millions of metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions per retrofitted power plant per year.” According to information from the company, the Pleasants Power Station is expected to be fully operational by 2025, as the current hydrocarbons powering the plant will ultimately be replaced by the clean hydrogen as its fuel source.

west virginia department of environmental protection

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Spotlight On.



Elkins High School Football

Location: Randolph County

Number of members: 44

On Aug. 10, members of the Tigers Football Team worked together to pick up litter along Chenoweth Creek Road in Elkins. Head Coach Chad Ware said he was thankful that the Junior Women's Club of Elkins allowed them to be a partner in the cleanup. "I am proud of the guys who were able to make it out," Ware said. "After a long hot week of practice, these guys showed the commitment we hope to have consistently in our program, as we continue to serve our community, beyond the football field."

UPCOMING EVENTS



September 28 — Adopt-A-Highway Fall Cleanup.

October 27-29 — REAP/Association of Solid Waste Authorities Conference, Canaan State Park.

November 8-10 — Youth Environmental Conference at Blackwater Falls State Park.

November 15 — West Virginia Recycles Day.

November 23 — Recycling Coalition ReFashion Show, Huntington Mall.

November 30 — WV Recycling Coalition Youth Contest Deadline.

February 14 — Make It Shine Environmental Teacher of the Year Nominations due.

March 15 — Youth Environmental Program Club Reports Due.

** For more information about Make It Shine and Adopt-A-Highway events, call: 1-800-322-5530.*

MESSAGE

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The conference is for youth, ages 13-18, and we're hoping for a great turnout to this scenic location in Tucker County. The event was moved from October into November to avoid conflicts with fall scholastic sports, band activities, homecomings, fall festivals and more.

For more information about the Youth Conference, see details in this newsletter or visit the YEP website.

Finally, I'd like to welcome back Sara Prior as our District 4 coordinator, covering Clay, Fayette, Greenbrier, McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Raleigh, Summers and Wyoming counties. Sara left the YEP for a brief stint elsewhere in the agency and we are extremely excited to have her talents back on the YEP team.

It is with mixed emotions that we announce the retirement of Tom Aluise, a valued and long-term member of the YEP team. While we wish him all the best as he embarks on this new chapter of his life, his absence will be deeply felt by all of us.

CONFERENCE

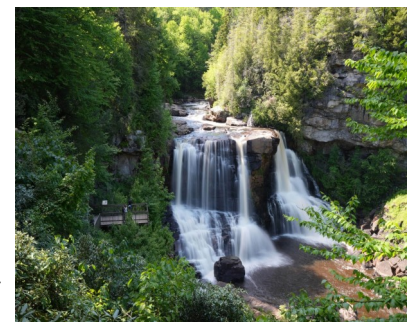
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three-minute report on any community environmental projects they've completed throughout the year.

Tentative tour sites for Saturday include the Blackwater Falls Nature Center, Dominion Energy Power Station, the National Youth Science Center and the Chaffey Run Strip Reclamation Site.

The conference also features speakers and other activities, including swimming and games on Saturday night. The conference concludes on Sunday morning. The deadline to register is October 11.

Leaders from the Department of Environmental Protection and Division of Natural Resources will lead the con-



Blackwater Falls State Park is located in the Allegheny Mountains.

ference throughout the weekend.

For more information about this year's conference, as well as Blackwater Falls State Park and the surrounding area, scan the QR code on page 1.

Remember to register early to secure a scholarship.