



Message from the director . . .

First things first.

You still have time to file a report with the Youth Environmental Program, as well as submit an entry into one of our prize categories including posters, forestlands and wood products art, essays and the \$10,000 Rick Vecellio Memorial Scholarship for high school seniors enrolled in the YEP.



Annette Hoskins
YEP Director

with the Youth Environmental Program, as well as submit an entry into one of our prize categories including posters, forestlands and wood products art, essays and the \$10,000 Rick Vecellio Memorial Scholarship for high school seniors enrolled in the

The deadline for your reports and entries is March 15.

Also, please remember that you must file your two-page Summary Report Form electronically. As always, we welcome hard-copy or electronic scrapbooks that highlight your group's efforts. You can find the electronic submission form for your Summary Report by going to www.dep.wv.gov and typing in "YEP" in the search bar. Once you're on the Youth Environmental Program page, click on "YEP Informational Flyer" then "Summary Report Form." The link to file electronically is at the top right of the page.

Also, please remember to email me a W-9 tax form unless you have done so in the past, or you are already on file with the state. For those

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Youth Conference attendees participate in an Environmental Escape Room at Twin Falls State Park.

Back in business . . .

Youth Conference returns after two-year pause for COVID

Southern West Virginia was the destination for the 47th annual Youth Environmental Conference (YEC), the event's first run since 2019 because of the pandemic.

The 2022 version was hosted in October by Twin Falls State Park in Wyoming County, where young West Virginians, ages 13-18, enjoyed the beautiful fall colors, in addition to the educational offerings at the conference.

Included with environmental education was a splash of state history as YEC participants visited the Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine and Youth Museum. That was preceded by a trip to the nearby Raleigh County Solid Waste Authority's landfill and recycling center in Beckley.

During a bus tour of the landfill, students



Emily Carothers describes her recycled art.

learned about the engineering behind burying trash, as well as the property's use of landfill methane to produce electricity. They also got a

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YEP News

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News from across the state

District 2

Susan Parker
Coordinator



DID you know that 80 percent of the world's population lives under a form of light pollution called skyglow?

Light pollution easily makes stargazing nearly impossible in many parts of the world.

A lack of a dark night sky affects us all. Dark skies are necessary for the success of many nocturnal animals that call West Virginia their home. Other migrating species traveling through the Mountain State also benefit from dark skies.

We are fortunate to live in a beautiful state that still maintains an emphasis on starry nights and has some of the best places to view the Milky Way.

I'm sure many of you have wanted to teach your groups more about the night sky but maybe the viewing time was past their curfew or a trip to the planetarium was out of budget.

I was recently introduced to an amazing resource called Starlab. This inflatable, portable planetarium comes with viewing filaments that light up the



space to show the beauty of a night sky in its entirety.

The Katherine Johnson NASA IV&V Facility at Fairmont State University offers free training to borrow many resources from its "loan and learn library," including the Starlab.

I invite you to check out its learning library at <https://www.nasaivverc.org/> educators and share your love of the night sky.

Statewide litter sweep deadline March 10

If your school or club is interested in participating in the official spring cleaning of the Mountain State, there's still time to sign up.

The annual Make It Shine Statewide Cleanup, sponsored by the state Department of Environmental Protection, is scheduled for April 1-15. The deadline to sign up is March 10.



The Make It Shine program will provide resources such as cleanup materials (bags, gloves), waste hauling and landfill fees to groups volunteering to conduct litter cleanups in state streams or on public lands.

More than 3,500 volunteers from nearly 150 groups participated in the 2022 cleanup, removing 146 tons of litter and collecting 1,190 tires from 292 acres of public lands and 55 miles of streams, while remediating 87 dumps.

To register, go to www.dep.wv.gov and type in "Make It Shine" in the search bar. A printable or electronic application is available on the Make It Shine page. Once your project is approved, DEP staff will coordinate delivery of cleanup supplies, waste hauling and disposal. For more information, contact Chris Cartwright at DEPwvmis@wv.gov or by phone at 1-800-322-5530.

District 3

Beth Henry-Vance
Coordinator



STUDENTS at Leading Creek Elementary School in Linn will celebrate International Water Day this month with a variety of educational stations and hands-on fun.

On March 22, all classes from preschool through sixth grade will take part in water-based activities and games, with a theme of why and how to conserve water.

The school's Water Day event is organized by fifth-grade teacher Tracy Arnold, who said it's a great way to expand on students' knowledge of streams and watersheds.

"We're hoping to do it every year," Arnold said.

Arnold said she started the school's Water Day celebration in 2022 (see photo), after local forester Jesse King explained that many state agencies have folks like him available to provide educational presentations.

Representatives from a varie-



ty of state agencies will participate in the school's Water Day event, including myself, Debbie Florence and Callie Sams from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection. Other folks will join us from the Division of Forestry, Division of Natural Resources, Experience Learning, Glenville State College and the local 4-H Extension office.

Maybe your school or youth group can celebrate Water Day, too! For more information, go to www.worldwaterday.org.

District 5

Tom Aluise
Coordinator



POINT Pleasant junior and senior high schools don't have to worry about their excess paper being buried in a landfill.

The Environmental Buddies have it under control.

Rhonda Blankenship (far right in photo) is a teacher at Point Pleasant High and the sponsor for the longtime school club.

Under her direction for the past 20 years, the Buddies have taken recycling to new levels.

Her students pick up paper not only at the junior and senior high schools, but also Point Pleasant Intermediate, the USDA Farm Service Agency and the Mason County Board of Education offices.

Using a county transit van, Blankenship drives students to the different locations to collect the recyclables, which are then transported to the Mason County Recycling Center.

"We take paper to the recycling center about two times per



week," said Blankenship, who's also a 4-H leader in the county. "We spend time each day in the classroom sorting, shredding and weighing paper in preparation for taking it to the recycling center.

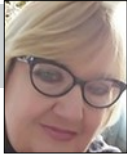
"At the recycling center, we sort it into bins, help with tearing apart books and watch how they bale recycled items."

Last year, the Buddies collected 5,721 pounds of magazines/books and 1,439 pounds of paper.

They also do litter cleanups on school grounds and at area parks.

District 6

Debbie Florence
Coordinator



GIRL Scout troops from Roane County gathered recently for “World Thinking Day.”

The theme for 2023, **Our World, Our Peaceful Future**, encouraged the girls to explore what they can learn from the environment and how they can work with nature to create a more peaceful and secure future.

The theme was created based on data gathered in 2020 in which Girl Scouts under 18 from 100 countries voiced “the environment” as their primary concern.

In conjunction with World Thinking Day, the Roane County troops worked on requirements needed to achieve the 2023 Global Action Award, which included environmentally focused goals, such as ensuring sustainable consumption and helping stop food waste, taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, conserving and protecting the oceans and marine life and protecting, restoring and



promoting nature and the animals that live in it.

The troops participated in a Youth Environmental Program presentation and activity based on the 3R’s — Reduce, Reuse, Recycle — principle. They discussed how the things they use daily and the waste they create impact the planet.

To apply what they learned, the scouts were challenged to think about how they might apply reduce, reuse and recycle to begin packing their own waste-free lunches to take to school.



YEC stops included Mountain Homestead and Beckley recycling center.

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first-hand look at the sorting and baling area of the recycling center, as well as its Upcycle Museum.

At the Exhibition Coal Mine, YEC participants were transported back in time to a former working underground mine. They also visited a coal company house, superintendent’s house, coal camp school, coal camp church and miner’s shanty, all former coal camp structures refurbished and integrated onto the Exhibition Coal mine property.

Also at the stop were visits to the Youth Museum and the Mountain Homestead, which recreates a

typical settlement on the Appalachian frontier.

Speakers at the weekend YEC included West Virginia University Tech professor Dr. Charan Litchfield and WVU Tech student Griffin Hobert, as well as Frank Pinter, an engineer with the Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Mining and Reclamation.

Saturday evening at the conference included a fun and challenging Environmental Escape Room expertly designed by Youth Program coordinator Debbie Florence.

This year’s conference is scheduled for October 6-8 at Cacapon State Park in the Eastern Panhandle.

west virginia department of environmental protection

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Spotlight on.



Wardensville Garden Market Junior Crew

Location: Hardy County

Number of members: 20

The Wardensville Garden Market Junior Crew won the Maple Tree Planting YEP award in 2022. To date, the organization has planted 450 trees down on the farm's lower fields, aiding in restoring the riparian buffer and previously existing wildlife corridors. With the help of many environmental partnerships, the Junior Crew, staff and volunteers get to be stewards of sustainable practices at the farm. If you would like to join in their efforts and volunteer for future tree planning events, visit: wardensvillegardenmarket.org.



March 15 — YEP reports deadline.

April 1-15 — West Virginia Make It Shine statewide cleanup.

April 19 — Make It Shine Earth Day Celebration at the Clay Center, Charleston.

April 22 — Earth Day.

April 29 — Adopt-A-Highway Spring Cleanup.

May 20 — Youth Environmental Day, North Bend State Park.

June 12-16 — Senior Conservation Camp, Camp Caesar, Webster County.

June 19-23 — Junior Conservation Camp, Cedar Lakes, Ripley.

August 5 — Adopt-A-Highway Appreciation Day, Tamarack.

September 9 — Great Kanawha River Cleanup.

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

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submitting individual entries such as posters and essays, each individual entry must include a W-9 form for the youth.

I hope you take the time to tell us about the wonderful projects you're accomplishing that are making West Virginia a better place to live and play. And, of course, you can win some money along the way!

As we look into the rest of 2023, I'm happy to announce that the YEP will be a complete team once again! Very soon, two folks will come on board to give the YEP a full complement of six district coordinators to blanket the state.

One of the new coordinators will cover Clay, Fayette, Greenbrier, Monroe, Summers,

Raleigh, Mercer, McDowell and Wyoming counties.

The second new staffer will be responsible for Harrison, Taylor, Preston, Monongalia, Marion, Wetzel, Marshall, Ohio, Brooke and Hancock counties.

Finally, don't forget to mark your calendars for Youth Environmental Day, scheduled for May 20 at North Bend State Park; state Junior Conservation Camp, scheduled for June 19-23 at Cedar Lakes in Ripley; and the Youth Environmental Conference, set for October 6-8 at Cacapon State Park.

As always, don't hesitate to reach out to me or your district coordinator if you have questions. Our contact information is in this newsletter.

Earth Day event set for April at Clay Center in Charleston

Elementary schools are invited to take part in the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection's 2023 Earth Day Celebration at the Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences in downtown Charleston.

The free event is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on April 19 on the terrace in front of the Clay Center. Activities will move inside if there is bad weather. Earth Day officially will be celebrated on April 22.

As part of its partnership with the Clay Center, the DEP is offering free access to the center's Caperton Planetarium and Theater to view a short, educational film, as well as free access to the Avampato Discovery Museum.

Space to these events may be limited, so register with the Clay Center soon.

Approximately 20 exhibitors from various state and federal agencies, including the DEP's Youth Environmental Program, will be on hand with educational displays and activities promoting environmental stewardship and resource conservation.

Earth Day is a terrific learning opportunity for elementary school children. If a group from your school would like to attend, please request registration information at groupreservations@theclaycenter.org or register with the Clay Center by contacting its box office at 304-561-3570.

