

WVDOH Today!

“The difficult thing was picking five, because we have exemplary employees in every District who do fantastic work, day-in and day-out,” said Jason Foster, P.E., Special Programs Manager, on selecting five employees to receive recognition on behalf of all WVDOH employees at the Governor’s State of the State address.

“We picked five folks who have done good work in Districts 3, 6, 8, 9 and 10. That was interesting in itself just to talk to the various districts. Of course, because of the limited seating, we could only send five, but everyone had people, and a multitude of people, that they would have loved to have sent.”

Kathy White, Dave Redd, Bob Davis, Will Wilson and Arlie Matney sat in the gallery during the State of the State address and accepted Governor Justice’s “thank you” on behalf of all WVDOH employees. The five made the opportunity to not only hear, but also say, “thank you” to Governor Justice and every state Legislator with whom they talked.

“Kathy White is one of our newer supervisors who has worked many years in District 3. She worked her way up through the ranks and became supervisor of Jackson County last year,” said Foster. “She has done a fantastic job in that county getting the

CORE maintenance plans brought to the forefront.”

“Dave Redd, this year, celebrates his 40th year with the DOH. He’s spent his career in District 6. He is the heavy maintenance supervisor. He’s in charge of pile wall construction.”

“I got to meet Bob Davis and Will Wilson for the first time when they came here, but their reputations had preceded them,” said Foster. “Bob works in Tucker County. Will is a mechanic in District 9.”

“I’ve had the opportunity to work directly with Arlie Matney. He’s a very dedicated employee. He has spent the last several years developing CORE maintenance plans for District 10,” said Foster. “He’s very much a gentleman who you could ask the impossible and he will not only deliver it, he will let you know the good people who came along to help. He’s a fantastic man to work with; always has a good attitude, always positive, always looking for ways to improve and move forward. I’ve never had a time where I’ve asked for anything that he didn’t find a way to make it happen for us. Very hard worker. Very good man.”

These are the five, but we have a multitude.



Who Are The 5?

“We Have a Multitude.”

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Veteran's Memorial Bridge: Million Pound Move

If you look up “easy” in the dictionary, you won’t see a picture of District 6 Traffic Engineer, Paul Hicks, coordinating the movement of a superload across the Veteran’s Memorial Bridge.

“We were contacted by the hauler of the superload to find suitable timeframes for moving,” said Hicks. “The best time to move the loads are when traffic is least impacted. The hauler contacted both West Virginia and Ohio to find acceptable days. The entire route needed to be evaluated beforehand to make sure there were no obstructions and no limitations.”

A review of all the signs on the route revealed that those in West Virginia could be avoided by having the hauler use the full width of the road. No road signs would need removed.

“The biggest issue we faced was the potential of a breakdown,” said Hicks. “But, with the amount of law enforcement cooperation between the two states, if that happened, we would have been able to respond with the appropriate lane

closure setup prior to adversely impacting a peak traffic flow.”

In the end, the move was easier because of the preparation time spent at the beginning. Everything that could go wrong was considered carefully, and any potential problem was solved before it occurred. It wasn’t easy, but it was as easy as it could be. It was a perfect example of the virtue

of planning ahead. All who witnessed the move agreed that it was pretty cool, and were thankful that it was uneventful—thanks to Hicks and all others involved.



Photos courtesy of District 6.

WVDOH Today! is a monthly newsletter published by the West Virginia Division of Highways and distributed statewide via email to 5,000 employees. All content is developed by the editor, unless otherwise credited. The purpose of this publication is to facilitate connection across the diverse worksites and professions represented among WVDOH employees to empower us to function as **one West Virginia Division of Highways**, and with our sister agencies, **one West Virginia Department of Transportation**. We encourage employees to write in and share thoughts.

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We are recognizing our people.

WVDOH is Now Hiring with good jobs available all across the state.



Kick-Off: West Virginia Bridge Design and Build Contest

The West Virginia Bridge Design and Build Contest has served as WVDOH's educational outreach effort for 19 years and continuing. It's truly a proud tradition, bringing together students, teachers, parents, colleges, and professionals around the mission of making sure that West Virginia's hardworking students know there are good jobs for them in all parts of our state. Countless WVDOH employees have served as volunteers in middle and high school classrooms across the state and brought this STEM competition to our next generation of engineers.

At the 2020 Kick-Off, held at BridgeWalk in Fayette County, Secretary Byrd White jumped in with both feet to his first year with the contest. White talked with students about the value of participating, and the enthusiasm WVDOH has for their education and their future.

Students who were present for the kick-off were then treated to a free BridgeWalk tour. Students who were not present on January 11 have not missed this opportunity. Every student who submits a design that passes the load test (thus qualifying them to enter the contest) will receive a complimentary BridgeWalk tour for themselves and their family. This is equally true whether they are in 1st place on the leaderboard, or 347th place. It's open to all. Tourists from around the world visit our beautiful West Virginia treasure, the New River Gorge Bridge. By entering the contest, the student earns the tour without cost.

Without cost is a key to keeping the contest successful. When a teacher requests a classroom visit the visit is free, thanks to our WVDOH volunteers and engineering college students. Any

middle or high school teacher, public, private or home school, can request a visit at wvbridgedesignandbuildcontest.com. The software students use to enter is also entirely free, and they may install it on as many computers as they like—school, home, library. When the national West Point Bridge Design Contest ended, WVDOH requested permission to continue updating the software each year. Permission was granted and the software updates this year were made by our own employees; Dustin Fezell, Josh Sizemore, Marshall Burgess, and Reshma Joy. This dedicated team, upon completion of this year's updates, began looking ahead to the changes they will make next year.

There are schools who have participated in the contest for more than 15 years, and students who come back year after year trying to win the coveted traveling trophy for their school (and trying to win cash prizes; available for both the software portion and a balsa bridge build portion of the contest at the final competition in April.) Five engineering colleges across the state have gotten their students involved, joining forces with WVDOH in helping the next generation reach

their potential. But like many of the best (true) stories WVDOH has to tell, there are still areas where no one has heard of the competition. WVDOH Today! asks that you help distribute news of this inspiring STEM event, which over the years has developed in a way that is uniquely West Virginian. Any teacher of any middle or high school classroom can request a volunteer to get their students started. It's a win-win-win for our students, our state and our WVDOH.



Corridor H Signs Little Signs—Big Difference

Anyone who has ever navigated Corridor H can think back to the first time they tried to figure out, “Am I still on this road?” With two-lane and four-lane sections, it gets confusing. Cindy Cramer, Director of the Traffic Division, recently added Corridor H blue trailblazing signs along US 219. At key decision making points, the signs are intended to keep motorists travelling through safe and happy on their journey through a particularly beautiful part of our state. It’s a little thing, for sure, but every little thing we do is a big deal when it makes our roads safer and gives drivers an experience that is memorable for the right reasons.



Billion Dollar Club Now, On to Next Year...

WVDOH was recently awarded a plaque for joining the “Billion Dollar Club” by the Asphalt Pavement Association, at the annual board meeting, to recognize a billion dollar’s work on roadway improvement projects including interstates, expressways, US routes and secondary roads.

“The plaque signifies a major milestone and highlights the Governor’s vision with the Roads to Prosperity program,” said Jimmy Wriston, P.E., Deputy Secretary.

2019 is over, of course, and we’re in 2020 — a year in which we will continue to build and top all the excellence that has become habit to us. We’ve done a great job, and we keep moving. Next year, we’ll break another record — the multi-billion dollar club? It’s only January, but we’re starting to run like a well-oiled machine. On to bigger and better things.

What *Can* We Say On DOH Social Media?

We have a policy that outlines our responsibility for public speech on social media. We steer clear of libel, threats and harassment directed at our co-workers, the public, or anyone, and remain mindful of how we are representing ourselves as DOH employees. It’s important to read and understand the policy we live by; failure to read it does not change what it says. We own the results of our own actions; words are a form of action. We may be in the quiet corner of a room alone when we type a comment on our WVDOH Facebook page, but the moment we hit ‘post’ any of the 55,000 followers of the page could see it, or anyone else simply browsing by. Click ‘post’ and we’ve sent it to Secretary Byrd White.

What *can* we say on WVDOH social media? There is an increasing number of WVDOH folk who are standing up for our people and our work in some very graceful ways.

When we say of our co-workers, “Way to go!” “He’s a good man to work with,” “Much deserved recognition,” “West Virginia needs more like her,” we make our workplace better. Each time we speak well of each other publicly, we speak well of ourselves. We build up our team of 5,000 people, all working together in all parts of the state, all allies with common ground, all connected, all invested in our every accomplishment.

Our families do the same for us when they say, “Proud granddaughter,” “That’s my uncle!” and “So very proud of my son.” We appreciate their pride in us. These comments also serve as a reminder to the public that we’re West Virginia’s people, just like them. We’re not some detached government ‘they,’ we work here to serve our community.

We do not gain ground, collectively, when we insult the public, but a separate comment worded carefully does us no harm. “This was a tough project because...” “I’m thankful our people are out keeping us safe in this freezing weather.” “I was proud to be a part of this, it did a lot of good.” “I was proud to work with this team, on this project, they’re pretty amazing.” Persuasion doesn’t happen all at once. Every positive comment that says something honest and real adds one more drop of water to a sea of understanding.

We could throw rocks at our own house if we wanted. It’s permissible to say publicly that we hate our jobs and we hate West Virginia, that’s it’s just too much work to fix it and we’re giving up. Most of us choose not to. Here’s a shout out to those who speak well of who we are and what we do. Thank you for building all of us up.



Kale Road Bridge: “Everybody Really Stepped Up”



District 10 Bridge Engineer, Josh Anderson, P.E., took these stunning photographs as seven beams were set for the Kale Road Bridge project in Mercer County. The beams were 101.5 feet long, and each weighed 44 tons. This bridge replaces a low-water crossing which has long been problematic. This is the largest bridge for which D-10 has ever set their own beams.

“I just appreciate everybody staying late,” said Anderson. “Everybody really stepped up. You know, this is also the first time our District has ever used Symons forms. They’re metal forms, and a few of the other Districts have them, but we had always just used wood. We’ve always done good work with what we had, but it’s good to have the things that are more modern, that put us more on par with what the contractors are being able to use. We rented cranes and set these beams that were the largest we had ever set. It’s just really encouraging to be able to keep expanding on what we can do. We were all really proud to be working on this project, and we solved a lot of problems by eliminating that low-water crossing.”

The Geese Police: Collaborating With Champions

WVDOH executives recently met with three distinguished scientists from Hurricane Middle School, to consider a proposal for eliminating an ongoing problem on many of our bridges. The Putnam Pink Ladies Lego Robotics team, Kaitlyn, Olivia and Paisley, joked about re-naming themselves “The Geese Police” to reflect the project they are preparing to compete at the world Lego Robotics championships this spring.

“I don’t like to harm animals, of course,” said Kaitlyn. “With our project, it helps more people go away from harming them, so hopefully our project will help.”

The team developed an app with sounds that several species of public nuisance birds strongly dislike. In developing the app, they determined that pigeons dislike the sound of wind chimes almost as much as bridge engineers dislike pigeons. This sparked brilliance. The team requested a meeting with Secretary Byrd White, Deputy Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E., and Research Specialist, Perry Keller, P.E., to present the idea.

“I’m really excited to work with WVDOH,” said Paisley. “If our wind chimes actually do work, it will be cool to have solved the problem and saved a lot of money.” In the pilot project, wind chimes will be installed on several WVDOH bridges and a study conducted by the young scientists about their effectiveness on ridding the bridges of pigeons.

“We’ve worked with a lot of different groups,” said Olivia. “Like, the Girl Scouts. We’ve had to speak up and show them how to do it and so we’ve had to be leaders whenever we did that.” Blazing a trail for girls only slightly younger, while striving to solve problems for West Virginia tax payers, it’s all in a days work for “The Geese Police.”



Ray Patrick: ADA Sidewalk Projects

“We’ve been focusing on paving the roads where people drive,” said Deputy State Highway Engineer Greg Bailey, P.E., “Well, this is focusing on the sidewalks people need to get through. Someone may be living their whole life in a four block area, this opens up the world for them.”

“Achieving Americans With Disability Act (ADA) compliance for a sidewalk can be more difficult than it looks,” explains Ray Patrick, ADA Coordinator, who has coordinated the projects across the state. “Some areas have never been ADA compliant, with steep drop offs and steps. There are no typical areas; these are West Virginia sidewalks. We have two roads coming together and the angles of each are steep, and moving in different directions.”

Achieving ADA compliance with sidewalks, in the past, has thrown off schedules for numerous paving projects. To take care of the sidewalks ahead of paving “paves” the way to work efficiently and keeps the projects running smoothly. ADA sidewalk projects have now been completed in 37 counties. The 4,489 curb ramp locations completed represent 21.4% of the total number of ramps. Statewide, this success is a double win; not only are the sidewalks done ahead of time to pave, but every sidewalk completed is now in use by people for whom it makes a real difference—this gives citizens more freedom.

“This is life or death stuff,” said Bailey. “This impacts where people can go and where they can’t go. This is a win for the people who need it the most.”

Eric Steele: Around the DOH in Photographs



One of the friendliest faces in the WVDOH is making his way around all ten Districts. From eyes on the ground for SWAT complaints, to helping us share our story, Eric Steele is on the move. Take a look at some of the most encouraging things he saw while on recent visits to Districts 2 and 10. Of specific interest, please note the photograph which shows our tree trimming crew wearing their hard hats. Our people have families and friends who love them, so we need to make sure we all work together to protect each other and set a good example for following OSHA regulations on hard hat use.

District 2 Win: Mecca Drive-In

“The Mecca Drive-In building has been an eyesore in its community for a long time,” said Scott Eplin, District 2 Manager. “It’s on DOH right-of-way and it needed torn down. It’s heartwarming the teamwork that came together, from the Secretary’s office to my Maintenance folks and Bridge folks.”



The Mecca Drive-In project is representative of something which is happening all across the WVDOH. The long neglected building had been piled full of discarded items; over time piling up with trash tossed into it. Local residents had become concerned that it might fall in. Sitting on DOH right-of-way, it was a DOH responsibility, but it didn’t fit neatly into any category.

“That’s not the type of work they normally do, but everybody came together for a common cause and got it done in short order,” said Eplin. “It needed expedited. It was past time to tear down, but it didn’t fit neatly into any of the categories of work we do.”

To truly revitalize our WVDOH and our state, it’s time to clean up the messes in long-overlooked corners. Mecca Drive-In was one crumbling building among many along our roads and in our small towns, but this one was on WVDOH ground. When District 2 people came together to get it done, it was gone in a couple days and now it is forever off our housecleaning list.



Photos by Mike Gillum.



What Difference Did We Make?

All around the WVDOH, the holiday season was an opportunity to share. Some shared time and a meal with their co-workers. Some shared food, coats and gifts with others. While this is not a complete list of everything, here are some of the things WVDOH Today! has heard from around the state about the success of our sharing.

District 3 decorated a tree with WVDOH items. Topped with a hard hat, surrounded by West Virginia flags and caution cones, it was a fitting end to a year in which we collectively advanced our efforts to bring workplace safety into the forefront. The tree was erected with a sparkling safety record: zero injuries and zero dollars of equipment damage were reported on the project. District 3 also had an employee luncheon, and games such as the one Keeling Fife and Jared Evans are playing (pictured below.) D-3 Accounting Department collected 135 toys for Toys for Tots.



District 2 chose two children, with the first names Elijah and Catherine, from the Salvation Army Angel tree and made a world of difference to those two children.

Central Office Divisions collected 1,080 cans of food, and 116 pet food items to donate. Divisions also created gift baskets to use in a raffle to encourage donations. The baskets were creative in nature, and those who won them had a big surprise. Cookies and punch with the Commissioner, a long-held tradition in Central Office which had been absent for a couple years, was re-instated. Natasha White *might have* danced with a reindeer. Everyone shared stories from a successful year, and took a quick breather before gearing up for 2020.

District 5 donated 131 items to local children in the Toys for Joy program through the Mineral County Family Resource Network.

Items donated included toys, winter clothing, a bike, books and art supplies. Mike Stanislawczk (pictured below with Lisa Kisamore) operated an employee snack stand to raise \$539.27, which was donated to Warm the Children. This is a D-5 tradition. Pilgrims Pride donated two turkey's to D-5 to show their appreciation, and D-5 in turn donated those turkey's to Burlington Children's Home.



District 1 took care of holiday gifts for each of the 15 children currently staying at the Charleston YWCA Sojourners Shelter. They also provided a gift basket for each child's mother, filled with spa items and treats to make her holiday more special. This is an annual tradition in District 1, making a big difference

in a specific way for local women and children facing homelessness. Perhaps the most thoughtful part was that presents were wrapped, then placed in a large tote so that each family will have a way to carry them when they move on to a happier New Year.



Photos submitted by Districts.