

WV DOT Today!



HEADS HELD HIGH:

Smiling Behind Our Masks, WV DOT Moves Forward

“We have a lot of wonderful, talented employees who do make masks,” said Jeremy Casto, Chair of the WVDOH COVID-19 Task Force. “I’ve had boxes sent in to me of employee-made masks. The one I’m currently wearing was made by a friend of an employee in the Clarksburg area. It has WVDOH embroidered on it, and I’m very proud to wear that mask.”

The old ‘keep your head down, and walk slow’ adage of state government work is long gone for West Virginia Department of Transportation. Our heads are held high in all that we do, as we work to bring our agencies to a new level of transparency and accountability. Our heads are held high, and we’re smiling

behind our masks, as we move West Virginia forward.

“The Governor’s mandate for wearing masks is really important,” said Casto. “We don’t want an employee leaving out of here with COVID, going out and infecting their families and children. It’s really critical that we do all we can to keep everyone safe, their families and the



citizens of our state, at all times.”

“We appreciate all of our employees that are keeping up with the mask mandate,” said Casto. “You’re wearing your masks, some of you are wearing them proudly. We’ve seen a lot of cool masks out there. We really appreciate that. You’re keeping everybody else safe.”

Also in this Issue:

“The Sound of Freedom”

DMV Extends Deadline

Corridor H Photo Feature

WV DOT Today! New Editor



WVDOT Today! Welcomes New Editor

WVDOT Today! welcomes a new editor this month. Randy Damron is now on board to provide insight, inspiration and a million good ideas. It's a role which he will carry easily, having done exactly that for the entirety of his 18 year career with West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT.) Damron (pictured, behind camera, interviewing Tracy Brown, P.E., State Bridge Engineer) will also help connect WVDOT Today! to what's happening across the state.



Jennifer Dooley will continue her role as editor, as well, collecting, writing, arranging and making unusual faces at the computer screen each month as more than 5,000 excellent employees make their way into 8—12 pages and oceans full of good stories get sifted through for just a few.

Both editors encourage readers to write in and share thoughts. Keep those “Letter’s to the Editor” coming — but remember, “editors” is now plural, so the letters you write should be twice

as good, twice as long, and give us twice as much to consider.

“Each time I’ve had an opportunity to collaborate with Randy, I’ve found him to be completely diligent and dedicated to all he does,” said Dooley. “I couldn’t be happier to be working with him on this, and other projects including our new podcast, coming in August.”

The podcast will feature in-depth interviews from voices throughout the WVDOT, with an immediacy that should resonate well with an audience other media might miss. Current outreach includes events such as ribbon cuttings, and groundbreakings, work zone safety events, press releases, and of course this newsletter. The podcast will fill a missing slot, allowing WVDOT employees from across the state to address more complicated issues by simply talking to the public about what’s involved in the work. Transparency, which WVDOT works so hard to achieve, will come naturally with the podcast.

WVDOT Today! is a monthly newsletter published by the West Virginia Department of Transportation and distributed statewide via email to a strong network of the best employees on earth. All content is developed by the editors, unless otherwise credited. The purpose of this publication is to facilitate connection across the diverse worksites and professions represented among WVDOT employees to empower us to function as **one West Virginia Department of Transportation**. Working together, we can give West Virginia the transportation systems it deserves and be a driving force in building the economy West Virginia should have. It’s all connected. WVDOT Today! welcomes you to write in and share your thoughts.

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We are recognizing our people.





The Sound of Freedom: Military Aircraft Over Charleston

“In West Virginia, in the Aeronautics Commission, our goal is to support aviation across the state,” said Sean Hill, Director of the Aeronautics Commission. “We do that in several different ways as far as investing in the infrastructure which makes the airports possible. But also we want to make sure we bring awareness of what’s going on in our airports.”

Yeager Airport is now being used for hot fueling of military aircraft and as a home base for training operations. This is a positive solution for all involved. The airport makes up revenue lost from the decline of passenger travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. The local economy benefits from military use of the airport as a home base, with money spent in local hotels and restaurants having a wider impact on the community.

“It’s not just flying people from one part of the state to the world,” said Hill. “It’s really what opens our state up to the global economy. Bringing that awareness and letting people know, ‘hey, don’t be alarmed if you’re seeing some of these military aircraft that we’re not used to seeing in the area.’ There will be a little bit more noise, but we kind of say ‘that’s the cost of freedom, the sound of freedom.’”

“To make this happen, the communication that happens between the guard, that happens between the military, and that happens between the airport, all three combined come together,” said Hill. “They’re bringing in people from all over the country. It’s activity for the airport. It’s great for the military. It’s really a win-win situation for the state and for our country.”



What's the Best Change You See in WVDOT?

By Jesse Ward



"The atmosphere of the office is more positive and helpful."

-Rebecca Pauley
Office Assistant 2

"We are coming into the new century by using updated equipment to simplify things."

-Sheila Scott
Office Assistant 3



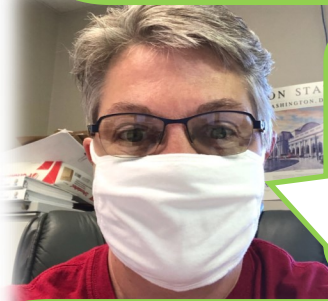
"I get to witness us collecting data for sidewalk ramps to make it more accessible to disabled citizens. I feel connected to what we do."

-Elijah Buckland
Highway Co-Op



"There's a lot left to do, but I'm finally starting to feel supported in being able to hire."

-Cindy Butler
State Rail Authority Director



"I'm glad to see the hiring of new employees to help with the extra workload."

-Robin Head
Accounting Technician



"Adapting during COVID-19 kept everyone able to work."

-Kyle Oliver
Highway Co-Op



"The whole organization has been making a concerted effort in communicating and being more efficient in doing business."

-Timothy Whitener
Administrative Services
Manager



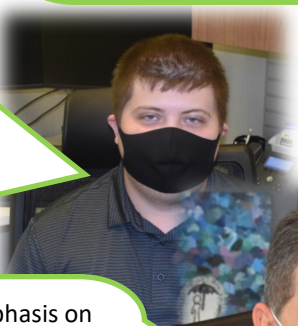
"I appreciate the cooperation with the federal government through the COVID situation."

-Bill Robinson
Director, Public Transit



"We have embraced new technology to help give our employees the tools they need."

-Josh Sizemore
Programmer



"Our administration is supportive in getting people hired and making sure roadwork is completed."

-Matt Ball
Assistant Director of HR



"We have an emphasis on reaching out to different agencies and public outreach."

-Tony O'Leary
Program Coordinator



"I appreciate the adherence of social distancing and the Governor's guidelines."

-Traci Monk
Office Assistant 3



Corridor H: Photo Feature By Randy Damron



**Corridor H is being
built — today**





Photo by Eric Steele.

Congratulations

to our WVDOT-SASHTO
Scholarship winners from
Secretary White and Deputy
Secretary Wriston.

Did You Know?

**By Angia Hughes,
Benefit Coordinator**

HSA's (Health Savings Account) are individually owned banking accounts and do not fall under the section 125 cafeteria plan guidelines.

Employees may start/revoke/change their HSA contribution at any point throughout the plan year.

FSA (Flexible Spending Account) selections can only be modified during Open Enrollment, or mid-year with a qualifying life event.

(WVDOT Today! welcome you to submit "Did You Know? Articles—DOHnewsletter@wv.gov.)

VISION AWARDS

Congratulations to the following individuals being recognized this month by Secretary Byrd White and Deputy Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E., for their dedication to The Vision.

**Jason Foster—State Highway
Engineer's Office**

Steve Cole—District 9

Kim Lilly—District 10

Ameche Watson—Office Services

Nate Tawney—Executive

Robin Gump — District 6

Joe Weiskircher—Programming

The Vision is simple; to be the best DOH in the country, for the purpose of giving our West Virginia the chance it should have — a place of prosperity and joy, where citizens have the best chance to build the lives they hope for. To be the best DOH in the country based on the quality of our work and motivation. To be the safest place for our employees to work. To be the best trained, and most educated.

To take pride in all we do.



DMV Extends Deadlines, Promotes Online Renewals

The West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles recently announced extensions until September 30 for driver's license's with an expiration date beginning March 1, including graduated licenses (levels 1, 2 and 3, includes February expiration dates) and commercial driver's licenses, license knowledge permits, and vehicle registrations including temporary vehicle registrations or plates and international registration plan registrations.

"We want to really thank our customers for all of their patience," said Natalie Holcomb, Public Information Specialist. "We know the last four or five months have been difficult."

The DMV has worked to make the situation more efficient and less frustrating for the public. Holcomb recognizes that employees, as well as the public, have had to adapt.

"I have seen some amazing, amazing work with our employees from the DMV," said Holcomb. "Especially our regional office staff, our headquarters staff. This is completely different than what any of us could have anticipated. The Governor likes to say, 'we don't have a playbook for it.' There's no playbook for COVID-19. Employees have had to completely be flexible, and adaptable. They're used to one way of doing things and now things have completely shifted with our appointment scheduler, and—you know what—they have done an excellent, excellent job with working as hard as they can to get things caught up. I'm just very proud of them, and I know our Commissioner, our executive staff, is too."

Many DMV transactions are available online or at a kiosk, and

offices are open by appointment. DMV employees understand, as well as anyone, that no one renews a license for fun. It's a to-do list item, rarely a bucket list item. Keeping the public safe from COVID-19 requires additional precautions. The DMV has worked to provide options to simplify the process; including online services and kiosks.

"One other thing to consider is that you can do a lot of our services online or at our kiosks," said Holcomb. "If you go to our website, dmv.wv.gov, all of our kiosks are listed. You can renew your vehicle registration, renew your driver's license, print our your driving record. We do tell you that, 'hey, if you want to skip that line, or even skip making an appointment, you can go to one of our kiosks across the state, go to our website, find all those locations, and we'd love to encourage you to use those.'"

Holcomb stated that employees have been not only compliant, but upbeat about following the mask mandate. Masks worn at DMV offices have often been creative in their design, and Holcomb is most proud of her own mask, featuring kittens.

"I tell you what, my dear, dear friend Debbie made this mask," said Holcomb. "I love cats. I foster and rescue, so of course I had to wear the cats. I haven't heard much from employees as far as masks are concerned, I noticed that everyone wears them like we are supposed to." Holcomb sees employees make the best of the situation, "We can't change what's going on, but we can change our attitudes. We can choose to have a good attitude. That's what

you do. You just make the best of the situation, and I think as a whole that's what DMV is really trying to do."



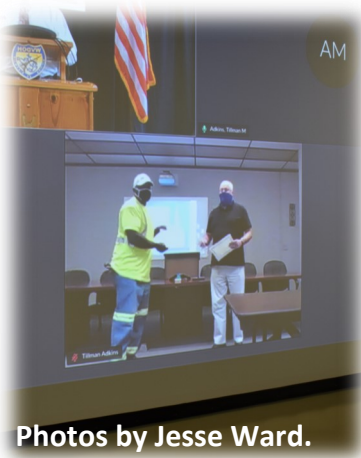


Robin Gump, District 6 Training Coordinator,

is inspired by this view of the fog as she drives in to work each morning. What inspires you? Send your words, or photographs, to WVDOT Today!

WVDOH Holds Safety Awards Virtually

West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH), unable to hold safety awards in person for safety reasons, recently presented 2018 Safety Awards to Districts 2 and 9 for their Sign Departments, and District 5 for Hardy County, Sign Department, Equipment Shop and Corridor H Knobley. Districts 1 and 10 also received awards for 2018, held at in-person ceremonies before COVID-19 said otherwise.



his employees homemade sausage biscuits) but often employees retire before their ceremony. That's the way it just quit being! 2019 Safety Awards are now being scheduled, so that when 2020 concludes those can be awarded swiftly. Working safely is the most important thing our people do, and that is to be commended. WVDOH is committed to making sure our people know that looking out for each other's safety on the job is deeply appreciated. If we don't do that, there's literally nothing else. Congratulations to all the 2018 winners, and we'll see you on screens (smiling and eating biscuits) for the 2019 and 2020 awards.



In the past, Safety Awards were running three or four years behind. Employees receive a sticker for their hard hat, and a token of appreciation from their District Engineer. The District Engineer/Manager might also prepare lunch or breakfast (Steve Cole, District 9, provided

July 26, 2020 marks the 30th Anniversary of the American's With Disabilities Act. WVDOT is proud to celebrate our commitment to an accessible transportation system.





The Leader in You: By Secretary Byrd White

A leader must first know where they are going: what is the objective, the main thing? The very word “Lead” implies a destination. Leading to what? The objective must be clear and precise. Exactly what are we trying to accomplish?

Stephen Covey said to “Start with the end in mind.” Good advice.

Second, once we know where we are going, how do we get there? How do we measure our progress towards our goal? You must have a clear, concise plan. Do not be distracted by things or events that do not further your progress toward obtaining your objective. With everything that you do, keep your objective in mind.

Many times, there are what I call “sub-objectives”. They are waypoints along the path to accomplishing the main thing, do not let them be your objective, do not let the steps distract you, keep your focus on the objective.

Many times, we have setbacks and failures. We have critics and those that tell you that you can’t succeed or that it can’t be done. The critics don’t count, do not let them distract you, do not give up. Keep your objective in mind. Persistence pays off.

Sir Hillary did not end up on the top of Mt. Everest by accident. If you do not know where you are going, you will end up somewhere else.

Celebrating Retirement During COVID-19

Editor’s note: A statewide employee newsletter for a transportation department of our proportions won’t pretend to be able to list every retirement, one announcement is pictured — but this applies to all.

A retirement announcement such as the one pictured catches our eyes and hearts for two reasons. First, the **purple letters**. District Six folks know Chris Lavenski. Many of the rest of us don’t, but just the same, all of us appreciate her work. We appreciate time well spent, helping to make our organization strong. All of us recognize her as part of our network, our DOT family, our sky full of shining stars... When any one of us retires they’re still one of us. There’s so much pride in WVDOT this will always be true.

Second, the **red letters**. In the midst of the same global pandemic we have to adjust every corner of our lives to account for, and when we strive to do so repeatedly even when it wears on us from every direction, those among us who have dedicated so much of the time in their lives to bettering our organization also have their moment of celebration (a moment they’ve earned) changed to accommodate. Forty-one years is roughly 10,660 mornings of getting up early to drive to work and put in 85,280 hours of effort; so while we’re not crowding into rooms to share cake and punch, we should all take the time to help our retirees celebrate what they’ve accomplished for all of us. Let’s go Above and Beyond for our retirees.



Please join us in extending retirement wishes

to
CHRIS LAVENSKI

District Six Right-of-Way Agent 3

Chris is retiring after more than forty-one years of dedicated service with the Division of Highways, working in several different District Six departments throughout her career.

Her last day with the DOH will be Friday, July 31, 2020.

Due to Covid-19 protocols, we are unable to have a full celebration, but invite you to celebrate with Chris from a distance. Call or email Chris to wish her well on her new adventure.

Congratulations and Best Wishes, Chris!



Masks for 2020; So we all see 2021.



Letter's Offer Praise For WVDOH

"Dear Mr. Greg Barr, On the afternoon of Tuesday, July 7th, while driving through West Virginia on our way home to northeast Ohio, my husband hit debris in the road on I-77 North just south of Ripley. Our car immediately quit running. We were stranded on the side of the road with four kids in 90 degree heat. Luck was on our side and one of your courtesy cars stopped to check on us. The driver, Melanie Starcher, went above and beyond to help us and make sure we were safe. I am grateful that the WVDOH offers such a wonderful service and I'm especially thankful for the kindness of your employee. She made a stressful situation a little less stressful and proved that there are still so many good, kind people in the world."

-Ashley, Ohio

"(Received from Comment to Governors Office), My family and I just made a road trip to southwestern Colorado and made an interesting observation upon returning to West Virginia. After having traveled through Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky, we noticed that the roadsides and interstate medians in WV were absolutely beautiful compared to those other states. The interstate in WV did not have trash and debris and was nicely mowed. This was definitely not the case in many of these other states! It made us proud to see how well maintained our state's interstate highway system was. Great job to the WVDOH workers!" - Dennis, Weston, WV

"Dear District 4, I wish to thank the state employees who recently patched the potholes on Pricketts Creek Road and the interstate employees who cut the berms along this road from

Meadowdale Road to Montana Mines in Marion County. The berms had not been cut in four years and the weeds along the roadway were so bad that cars passing each other in opposite directions were getting the side mirrors scratched terribly. I stopped to thank the man running the tractor and he told me he was from the interstate crew and was just helping the local guys out today. I know I speak for the residents of Northwood Estates as well as the folks in Montana Mines when I say you have no idea how much appreciation we have for the state employees doing the work and improving the roadway past our wonderful Pricketts Fort State Park." - Jim, Fairmont, WV

"Dear Governor Justice (CC: Jimmy Wriston, Deputy Commissioner of WVDOH), I am writing to commend you for your support for the secondary road system in our state, and for the excellent maintenance job done by the Hillsboro (Pocahontas Co.) crew on the two mile gravel Jacox Road, putting it in it's best condition in many years. Please recognize these hard working employees." -Dick, Hillsboro, WV

"To Whom it May Concern, You probably get more complaints that compliments, but I'm writing to thank you for paving Tyrone-Avery Road in the Cheat Lake area. I should have written before this, but I only think about it when I'm driving on it, and by the time I get home, I forget. I think it only took a week to do the whole job. I was very impressed with the efficiency of the crews and the politeness of the flaggers. Again, thank you. It was much needed on this heavily traveled suburban road." -Janice, Morgantown, WV

Letter to the Editors: Julie Ashworth Tries Bridge Walk

Dear Editors,

My husband and I went on the New River Gorge Bridge catwalk tour on Friday. What a beautiful day for it! The trip was a last minute decision by my husband the day before. He had been wanting to try it for some time now. I was a little skeptical because of the height of the bridge. I watched a YouTube video to calm my nerves.

I was all strapped up in a harness with my mask on. A little bit of fright slipped into my mind when I took the first step onto the bridge. Turns out the scariest part of the tour was walking down a steep gravel path to the walkway. I took baby steps and held my husband's hand tightly and was so happy I took this tour! I truly felt proud that I work for the DOH.

The tour guide was wonderful and you could tell he loves his job. We stopped several times on the bridge walkway to watch a train pass underneath and to watch whitewater rafters. One tumbled over as the rapid is a Class IV right at the bridge. Our guide recommended great local places to eat in Fayetteville.

After the tour, we drove down Fayette Station Road to get a closer view of the rapids and to look up at the bridge. We had left Charleston at 10:00 a.m. that morning and were back by 5:00 p.m. the same day. It was a beautiful morning drive, stopping at Kanawha Falls and Cathedral Falls. What a wonderful day! The trip reinforced the love I have for West Virginia! I truly appreciate the beauty of our state! I recommend this trip to everyone!

-Julie Ashworth, WVDOH

