

WV DOT Today!

West Virginia Department of Transportation employees have a lot to be thankful for this year. It's the year we worked through a pandemic, when some state DOT's were laying off employees by the thousands. It's the year we made progress toward catching up on roadwork long underfunded, got innovative with airport revenues in a time when ridership was down, moved forward with public transportation on projects like the Bluefield Area Transit, kept those trains a rolling, adapted the DMV to keep customers safe, kept our rest areas so clean travelers noticed, and so much else in a time when we had to do Every. Single. Thing. Differently.

way to share the heart and soul of our organization; and that is — our people.

"My name is Darlene Parker, and I'm a Transportation Worker 1 in Lewis County. I'm thankful for my job."

"My name is Dean Harris. I'm a Transportation Worker 1. I'm thankful for my family and friends and everything God has blessed us with this year."

"My name is Cindy Butler. I am the Director of the State Rail Authority. On a personal note, I am most thankful for my wonderful friends who are like family and my family! Professionally, I am thankful for my job and the support I



A Thankful WV DOT

Around the state, employees like transportation worker Darlene Parker, pictured, share their gratitude openly and easily — they are at no loss of words because along with masks, caution, and balancing West Virginia's economy at a time when we see hope on the horizon for making it what it should be — the spirit of Thanksgiving has also been on their minds. Our WV DOT family has grown stronger, closer and better this year; like families everywhere. We're grateful for the simplest of things. Here are our "thanks givings," in our own words.

received from the Secretary's Office and my board of Directors. I am also thankful for the employees we have! We are a small agency but we have big responsibilities and my team comes together when they need to!"

"My name's Alissa Butcher and I work in the Design Department and I am thankful to have a job since I was laid off in January and I'm thankful for my beautiful daughter and my husband." (Continued on page 3.)

These words are truly their own; typed up by an Office Assistant named Jesse Ward for whom your editors Randy and Jennifer are grateful. As such, they don't legally represent an official opinion held by the WV DOT. They are edited only in the put-them-in-the-newsletter sense of the word, and they are not intended to convince anyone of anything. It's just a

Also in This Issue:

Honoring Our Veterans

Beckley Widening Project



Beckley Widening Project Update

The Beckley Widening Project, a collaborative effort between the Parkways Authority and Division of Highways, which widens the West Virginia Turnpike from mile marker 40 to 48 in Raleigh County, is now 60% complete. This important project was one of the first Roads to Prosperity projects to begin work. It has an anticipated completion date of November of 2022.

With the switching of the travel lanes from the outside lanes to the inside lanes on November 19, motorists saw a smoother ride and improved surfaces. Jeff Miller, Director of the Parkways Authority, is quick to point out that although the ride is much more smooth, the surface is not the final surface. Motorists should "Just. Slow. Down." And keep their "Heads up; phones down!" as they travel through this and other work zones.

"It's a 120 million dollar project, through the DOH, a partnership," said Jeff Miller, Director, Parkways Authority.

"The economic driver that the Turnpike is and always has been, the future is very bright in regards to the fact that that will widen the road through the Beckley area," said Miller.

This stretch of interstate is one of the most congested on the West Virginia Turnpike, so completion of the project will also improve safety for travelers.

"This is a wonderful organization," said Miller. "Every single person that I've met, truly from top to bottom in this organization, they love their job, they've been here for a long time, so they all know what they're doing. They're wonderful to work with. As soon as I walked in the door, everyone was very helpful. For me, coming in as a new Executive Director, you want to

make sure that your people have a certain buy-in on the ground and in the field, and they do. They love what they do, and I love being here. It's really been a great experience so far."



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.



A Thankful WVDOT (Continued)

“Good Afternoon. My name is Joe Weiskircher (pictured.) I am the Assistant Division Director of the Programing Division. I work in Charleston, at the State Capitol, Building Number 5. I’m

reading my notes, so I don’t leave anything out. What I am thankful for is my faith, my big family, my wife Joyce, our two daughters, Jessica and Andrea, my Mother and Father, who have 8 offspring — 5 girls, 3 boys, 17 grandchildren, and 6 great grandchildren and my country. We live in the greatest country in the world and I am thankful for our flag which represents our freedom. I am also thankful for our



military and our veterans. I’m also thankful for Dr. Joseph Africa and his staff at CAMC. Dr. Africa is the surgeon who performed a kidney transplant for me in January of this year. I am blessed and I am doing very well thanks to Dr. Africa and his staff. Today, we are excited and thankful for a brand-new baby girl born yesterday in Huntington to our daughters Jessica and our future son-in-law, Kevin. Our first grandchild for Joyce and I and her name is Zoe Lee. She is an absolute beautiful little girl. I am also thankful for my job at the West Virginia DOH. I’ve worked in the Programing Division for 35 years to provide for myself and my family. Thank you for that. And last but not least, I am also thankful that I am retirement eligible. So, possibly, I can retire before Jimmy or Byrd tries to fire me. Thank you very much and have a good Thanksgiving.”

“Hi. I’m Kelly Hayhurst and I work out of the Reporting Unit in District 4. I am thankful for many things this year. I am very thankful for my family and my DOH family. We have been working through a pandemic and we have managed to stay healthy and safe and continued working through this. Every day I am thankful, but I am truly thankful for my DOH family.”

“Hi. My name’s Jennifer Greenawalt and I’m the Maintenance Secretary here at District 4 Headquarters in Clarksburg. I’m thankful for so many things this year. I’m thankful for my job, my family and our continued health, and my friends and co-workers here at the District. I want to wish everyone a happy and blessed holiday season.”

“Hi. I’m Kim Fernandes, Grant Administration Unit Leader in the Planning Division. This Thanksgiving, I am thankful for family, friends and good health.”

“Hello. Jeff Polling. I work for the Department of Highways, West Virginia, Braxton and I’m thankful to have my health and everybody we work with out here has been healthy. I hope everyone has a good Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.”

“I’m Bill Robinson, Director of the West Virginia Division of Public Transit. I am thankful

professionally for the generosity of the federal agencies and the WVDOT in allowing managers to be flexible with our employees in response to the COVID crisis. The federal government has provided funding, PPE, etc. that has allowed us to better serve the citizens during this troublesome time and the WVDOT has allowed us unparalleled freedom in dealing with our employees and meeting their needs. Several members of my family and myself have had the COVID disease; I am very thankful none of us were in danger during our illness and all of us have made a full recovery. I am also grateful for this season; this time of spirituality that all people, no matter what their beliefs, can focus on something higher and better than the pull and tug of everyday life. The Christian Bible says about this season “For unto us a child is born... and the government shall be upon his shoulder...” Until that day, we have been entrusted with the government and the fortunes of our fellow citizens and should take a measure of pride in the work we perform and who we do it for. “

“Hello, everyone. My name is Lowell Arthur. I’m a Highway Maintenance Assistant in District 2 in Cabell County. I’m thankful for my health, my family’s health. I’m thankful for my job and I’m thankful to live in a great state that’s located in the greatest nation on the face of the planet. I hope everyone has a very Happy Thanksgiving.”

“Joseph Cottrill, Transportation Worker 3 Equipment Operator in Gilmer County and I’m thankful for God and family.” (Cont.)



A Thankful WVDOT (Continued)

"Hello. My name is Claire Pinder and I am the Reporting Unit Leader for District 4. Yes, I work a hectic, fast paced, short deadline, but amazing organization. I am so thankful and blessed to be working for DOH. I am also thankful that after 2 years of surgery, 12 rounds of intense chemo treatment, I will be cooking Thanksgiving dinner for my parents once more. From my home to yours, have a beautiful and blessed Thanksgiving."

"I'm Jimmy Wriston. I'm the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Transportation, Deputy Commissioner of Highways and I'm thankful, during this holiday season, to be a part of this great organization and by this organization, I mean that I'm glad to be part of the people here cause they're the best Transportation Department in the country and I'm very thankful to get to work every day with them during this exciting time to be a transportation official."

"My name is Howard King and I work out of District 3. I'm the Resurfacing Coordinator and I'm thankful that we haven't had to shut down all this time and I've been working for the Department of Highways for 34 years."

"My name is Aaron Ballard and I am a Highway Engineer Trainee from Monongalia County. I am most thankful for my relationship that I have with my creator, Lord, and savior Jesus Christ who died on the cross for my sins which opened up the gates of heaven to me and guaranteed me the promise of eternal life through faith in him. I am also thankful for the earthly blessings he's bestowed upon me including a loving family, good health and a stable career with the DOH and most recently, a new house. Which I am very thankful for among many other things."

"I am Tressie Lopez and I am the Program Oversight Section Head in building 5 at the Capitol Complex and I am thankful for more than I can list but I'm mostly thankful for my 2 beautiful children."

"Hey. This is Gene Hensley down here in District 10. I'm a TRETAS Chief Utility Inspector for District 10. I'm very thankful for each breath I breath. I thank God every day for the opportunity to get up and go about my way. I'm thankful for my family and friends and I'm thankful for the opportunity to have a career as I do. "

"Hi. I'm Renee Kendell. I work as an Account Tech in District 3, Wood County and I am so thankful this year, first of all, for my health and the health of my family through these bad times. Everybody's having a lot of sickness going around and I'm thankful for the health of my family. I'm thankful that I have a job. A lot people have not had very good financial luck this year and that is something I am very thankful for. So, Happy

Thanksgiving."

"My name is Julian Woods. I'm the Executive Director of Human Resources for DOT and DOH and a few things I'm thankful for? First of all, I'm thankful to be a part of such a dynamic and team-oriented agency. I'm thankful that we've been able to put forward new hiring guidelines and our new compensation career plan. I'm thankful for the patience and the love of this agency that many of our employees have and have had for over 10, 15, 20 years. I'm thankful for being a part of a dynamic and wonderful team. Other than that, I'm thankful for my two puppies and my wife. So, thank you."

"Hi. My name is Tara Carter and I'm the Permit Supervisor for District 4 and these are the things that COVID has taught me to be thankful for this year. Good health. Money in the Bank. Good friends. Freedom of religion. My parents. Weekends. My spouse. Pets. Learning from mistakes. Opportunity to get an education. Having a home. Good neighbors. The ability to read. Breathing in fresh air. A bed to sleep in. Laughter, love, safety, and security. Cars. Sunshine. Time. Clean water. Cellphones. Books. Kindness of strangers. Campfires. Libraries. Holidays. Freedom of Speech. Rainbows. Tears. Waking up today. Indoor Plumbing. Wisdom that comes with Age. Mountains. Eyesight. Pastors who believe in the word. Grocery stores. Sunsets. Entertainment. Morning birds singing. My mind. Sunrises. Employment. Diversity. The Moon and the Stars. Electricity. Air conditioning. Hearing. Movies. My Children. The ability to learn. People who are willing to teach. Oceans. Science. Music. Evangelists who spread the gospel. Entrepreneurs and inventors. Online shopping. Warm clothing. The freedom to vote. Internet connections. Challenges. Walking paths and hiking trails. Our Armed forces. But, above all, I am thankful for my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ because, without him, none of the rest is possible. Have a Happy Thanksgiving and enjoy this time with family and friends."

"Hi. My name's Scott Blosser. I work in District 4. I'm the Bridge Repair and Design Engineer and with Thanksgiving approaching, I'd just like to say I'm thankful for my faith, family, and friends and thankful for my job at the Division of Highways and that we've all been able to work through this COVID pandemic and I just want to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving."

"I'm Aaron Stevens. I am the Acting Maintenance Engineer for District 4. I am thankful for my family and my work family. The Division of Highways has been a great place to work. I want to wish everyone a happy and safe Thanksgiving." (Continued)



A Thankful WV DOT (Continued)

“Hello. My name is Hunter Booth. I’m the District 3 Field Maintenance Engineer. I work in Parkersburg, WV and one of the things I’m thankful for is my Co-Workers. They’re always colorful and fun to work with and they make work go by a little bit quicker. “

“Hello. I’m Melissa Midkiff, Highway Office Assistant Coordinator at 1028 Mercer County and what I am thankful for is my family, friends, health, co-workers and my job. I am very thankful we have all stayed healthy and safe through this pandemic and I hope we continue to stay that way. Thank you and have a Happy Thanksgiving.”

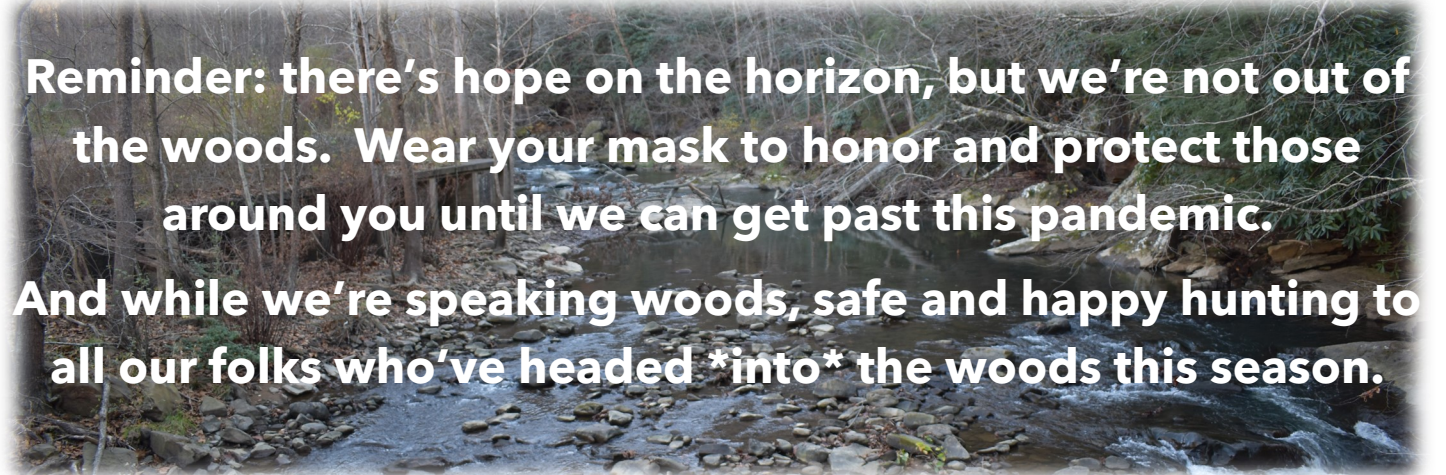
“Hello. My name is Jeff Crislip. I’m a District 4 Maintenance Assistant and I am very thankful and grateful this year first and foremost for my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Secondly, my family, my children, grandchildren with a new set of twins on the way after Thanks- between Thanksgiving and Christmas, my siblings, some of my family and my extended family, which is the Department of Highways cause we’re together, sometimes, more than my regular family. So, I’m really grateful and thankful for them. I’m also thankful for my health

and the ability to ride my motorcycle across the United States on back roads so I can compare those back roads to the roads we have here in West Virginia. So, everyone have a wonderful and blessed holiday season and many blessings to you and your family.”

“Hello Everyone. I am Jeanie Ward. I am a Highways Human Resource Specialist 2 for the Division of Highways here in District 10 and I’d like to say that I am thankful for my family, my friends, and my amazing Job here at the West Virginia Division of Highways in Human Resources. I hope you all have a fantastic holiday. “

That’s page after page of thank yous, just gathered word-of-mouth by District Engineers, Division Directors and Agency Heads. They’re different, like a gathering, but there are many blessings to count and anyone you ask would have more.

To share these thank yous with your friends and families, tune in to the November 24 episode of WV on the DOT podcast, available on SoundCloud and at transportation.wv.gov A handful are also featured on a video on WV DOT’s Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.



Reminder: there’s hope on the horizon, but we’re not out of the woods. Wear your mask to honor and protect those around you until we can get past this pandemic.

And while we’re speaking woods, safe and happy hunting to all our folks who’ve headed *into* the woods this season.



NEW PODCAST - “WV ON THE DOT”



Now on the Soundcloud

App!

New Shows: Thursday 4:00 p.m.

Transportation.wv.gov

Click on the Podcast link.



The Leader in ... Us

Secretary of Transportation, Byrd White's, column "The Leader in You" has become a staple in WVDOT Today! For November "The Leader in You" column demonstrates yet another facet of leadership, what happens when Byrd *doesn't* write a column?

A good leader has a winning team, strong enough to step in and carry forward any time. That team itself is made of leaders. That team doesn't differ or flip-flop; doesn't backstab; doesn't say one thing and do another; doesn't turn to jello when leaders turn their heads. This month, "The Leader in You" column is carried by those leaders. Read on!

"One of the facets that impresses me most about Secretary White's leadership," said Ryland Musick, P.E., Ph.D., Deputy State Highway Engineer, "Is that he always insists on maximum quality and yield while maintaining proper integrity. He is always appreciative in each and every employee, and does not take them for granted." When Musick says 'maximum quality and yield,' he would know. He has become a go-to guy for an ever increasing network of people, ready with information and numbers at the drop of a hat.

"Another thing that stands out is that you should tell the truth, no matter what," said Musick. "Whatever it is, we can deal with it."

"Byrd has been very accessible," said Bill Robinson, Director of the Public Transit Authority. "Access is important when making decisions, particularly in a fast-moving situation. He also listens. Listening is an important skill for a high-level executive; he must trust, and listen, to the people working with him. As well, he is easy and approachable. There is a time for formality and a time to close ranks and build relationships. Byrd understands this very well." Like Musick, the qualities Robinson finds appealing in another are qualities he holds as well.

"Happy and always smiling, he brings a positive attitude to our workplace and encourages others to do the same," says Rita Pauley, Assistant Commissioner, who — (you guessed it) holds those same traits. "An open door policy. The willingness to respond or have someone respond to questions quickly. Sincerely wanting every employee to enjoy working as a member of our team. The belief that we all have value and are important to DOT's mission."



Virtual Conferences

It's conference season, and here at WVDOT, conferences continue thanks to employees like Monica Kessell (pictured, assisting with Human Resources virtual conference.) While we don't have endless coffee and cookies, we have dedication, spirit and the understanding that it's really important to just keep going. We took so many things for granted, and that's one way of life we may not go back to. Everything matters more when you've gone the extra mile to reach it.

Staying focused, session after session, gives us a brief glimpse into what the younger members of our family (family, not "families" — if this COVID thing doesn't show us how much we're all ONE then what could?) are going through as they struggle with virtual learning and try to keep up in school. Ours is just for a few days. Theirs is for one of the precious few years that have names; freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, 3rd grade, 2nd grade, 1st. None of those years are years they can afford to miss. Some of them are in places where they will really miss out, and some will fall behind. We cheer them on in their efforts to keep going. The year we're in will change the way they see things, too.

Hopefully, when they get through, they'll come join us. They will sign up (through streamlined, efficient hiring practices) for careers where they can call West Virginia "home" for a lifetime.

I ~~JUST~~ WORK HERE.



Recognizing Our Veterans



WVDOT deeply appreciates the courage and dedication of all of our Veterans, such as Cory Wilmoth (pictured, above) and Billy Davis (pictured, below.) They serve now in every Department and District, in all our WVDOT agencies. We are eternally grateful to them.



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 .

Angia Hughes—Human Resources

Deanna Simms—Contract Administration

Elizabeth Lilly—Programming

Kelli Clagg—Office Services

Charlie Reel—District 9

Tim Sedosky—Planning

Lee Thorne—District 5

Jacob Bumgarner—Operations

Dee Begley—Engineering

Alanna Keller —Special Projects

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 go Above and Beyond.

To take pride in all we do.



Stress Vs. Digestion

Carly Gandee - Wellness Coordinator



Your Stress Matters More Than You Know

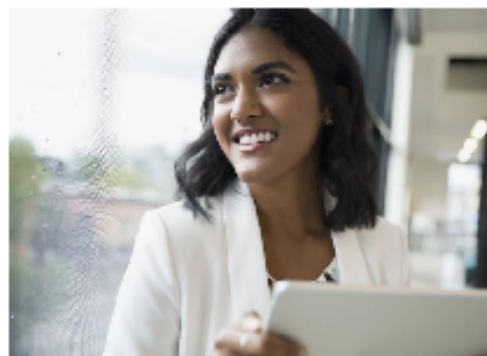
Ever wonder why you get “butterflies” in your stomach before doing something stressful at home or at work? Or why you feel like your stomach is “tied in knots” after an argument? Ever find yourself running to the restroom even if it was not caused by anything you ate? Stomach problems are one of the most common symptoms of stress and anxiety.

Interesting enough, there is a powerful connection between the gut and the brain. Outside of the brain, your digestive track is the next largest area of nerves. The digestive tract and the brain both share many of the same nerve connections. Making the management of your stress and anxiety even more important to maintain.

Here are a couple tips to help deal with stress and anxiety to manage healthy digestion:

- Take a time-out. Practice yoga, listen to music, meditate, get a massage, or learn relaxation techniques. Stepping back from the problem helps clear your head.
- Eat well-balanced meals. Do not skip any meals. Do keep healthful, energy-boosting snacks on hand.
- Limit alcohol and caffeine, which can aggravate anxiety and trigger panic attacks.
- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise daily to help you feel good and maintain your health.

- Take deep breaths. Inhale and exhale slowly.
- Count to 10 slowly. Repeat, and count to 20 if necessary.
- Do your best. Instead of aiming for perfection, which is not possible, be proud of however close you get.
- Accept that you cannot control everything. Put your stress in perspective: Is it as bad as you think?
- Welcome humor. A good laugh goes a long way.
- Maintain a positive attitude. Try to replace negative thoughts with positive.



“IN UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF DIGESTION, YOU’LL DISCOVER WHO’S IN CHARGE. HERE’S A HINT. IT’S NOT YOU.”

- Nancy Mure

