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75 CENTS

Saturday

April 24, 2021



High **63** Low **46**

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Coronavirus numbers in West Virginia

Total tests: 2,654,442
Percentage: 5.19% positive
Cases since 3/19/20: 150,693
Current cases: 7,330
Cases last 24 hours: 405
Vaccines: 1st shot, 694,200 fully vaccinated, 543,654
Total state deaths: 2,813

These numbers are the latest from state Department of Health and Human Resources.

WVU

Board of Governors meeting in-person

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Members of the West Virginia University Board of Governors met in person at the Erickson Alumni Center for the first time since the pandemic began more than a year ago.

President Gordon Gee talked about the challenges the pandemic created and amplified, most critically, mental health.

"I take this issue very seriously — especially in light of the tragic death of one of our students one week ago today," Gee said, referring to a young student who jumped from a parking garage in Sunnyside.

Gee noted while every experience is different, the pandemic has underscored the concerns of some WVU students about mental health support.

"We are committed to improving and expanding services for our campus community," Gee said.

He also recognized long-standing racial and social justice breakdowns laid bare by COVID-19, calling attention to the university's work to address policing, development of Black student leaders, the campus environment and campus and community partnerships to ensure Black students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members feel safe, valued and appreciated.

Vice President for Strategic Initiatives Rob Alsop was joined by Erin Newmeyer, executive director of projects, to outline the latest on COVID-19-related efforts on the Morgantown campus, including the number of vaccinations through the university's clinics for students and employees across the WVU system.

In Morgantown, 2,338 (out of 6,000) employees and 5,442 (out of 16,000) students have been vaccinated.

In Beckley, 204 (out of 300) employees and 131 (out of 1,167) students have been vaccinated.

In Keyser, 95 (out of 202) employees and 189 (out of 966) students have been vaccinated.

Alsop also looked ahead to the university's fall planning and the development of a new 10-year campus plan. The last plan launched in 2012 with an update in 2017; a new plan is required every 10 years.

SEE WVU, A-2

STATE

Justice rolls out program to convince avoiders to get vaccine

BY DAVID BEARD

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"Beat 588 ... Bad" has transformed from a slogan jotted on a piece of notebook paper Wednesday to a full-blown program to try to get the vaccine holdouts immunized.

Gov. Jim Justice announced the program during Friday's COVID-19 briefing. He explained

the reasoning, but details remain to be unfolded.

The 588 is short for 588,000, representing the 40% of the state's population eligible for the vaccine who won't get it. So far, 694,200 residents have had at least one dose, while 543,654 have been fully vaccinated.

But there's been a steady decline in turnout since the ini-

tial strong surge, when demand was outpacing supply — and now it's just the opposite. Joint Interagency Task Force Director James Hoyer said Friday there are 180,000 doses in stock.

"Beat 588 ... Bad" began Friday, Justice said, and he called on his team to take 24 hours to cook up and bring to him a variety of ideas to win over and bring vac-

cine access to three key groups: Those who want it but find it inconvenient to get, kids 16 and up, and those who are hesitant or refusing.

"Beat 588 ... Bad" will be part public relations campaign, Justice said, and part finding ways to bring vaccine clinics closer to the people — to fairs and fes-

SEE COVID, A-2

MORGANTOWN'S SISTER GARDEN



Above, a concept image of the eco-park the City of Morgantown is providing \$15,000 to design in its sister city of Xuzhou, China. Morgantown City Council recently approved the funds for the landscape design and master planning and is working with WallacePancher Group, as well as representatives of the West Virginia Botanic Garden and WVU Core Arboretum on the project.

Right, a detailed map of the "Sister City Garden."

Submitted photos



BY BEN CONLEY

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Morgantown's sister city of Xuzhou is a gateway to eastern China, with a population of more than 8.5 million people.

The major transportation hub in the northwestern Jiangsu province, Xuzhou is the bustling center of the Huaihai Economic Zone.

But before you conclude that these sisters have nothing in common, take a moment to consider the Liriodendron — a genus of tulip tree with exactly two species — one native in and around West Virginia, the other native to China.

This, said West Virginia Botanic Garden Executive Director Philip Smith, is what you call floristic disjunction, and it represents the level of consideration that went into planning Morgantown's portion of a park that will be part of a national garden expo coming to Xuzhou.

"We really focused on the plants that are native to China but exist in the same genus or family here in West Virginia," Smith said. "These are plants that have a common ancestor, but they've been separated over time by these continents. So it's really an interesting natural history story to tell, and we thought it would be something nice to integrate into that design."

Morgantown City Council recently approved \$15,000 for the landscape design and master

planning of the "eco-park," and is working with WallacePancher Group, as well as representatives of the Botanic Garden and Core Arboretum on the project.

According to information put out by the city, the design elements are representative of Morgantown and surrounding West Virginia.

It features an inner circle highlighting urban design elements, including a grid of Morgantown's downtown streets, mural walls and pedestrian lighting with flower baskets. The urban center transitions to a more rural outer ring, with paths meandering through wooded areas, a fire pit and rock outcropping. It is tied together with a water feature representing the Mon River and Deckers Creek.

Xuzhou plans to build seven parks in the international zone of the expo, each dedicated to a sister city. Morgantown will be the only one from North America.

Xuzhou's Bureau of Parks and Urban Development will pay to construct the park, which is scheduled to open in September.

Through its Sister Cities Commission, Morgantown established a "sister city" relationship with Xuzhou in 2016 after holding a "friendship city" status since 2012. Morgantown is also sister city with Guanajuato, Mexico.

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ENVIRONMENT

Cheat fears for safety of water life

FOC results cause concern after T&T Mine runoff event

BY GABRIELLA BROWN

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Chemistry test results collected by Friends of the Cheat has caused the organization concern over the long-term impacts the T&T Mine event may have on aquatic life.

Water quality has given the WVDEP and FOC a snapshot into how aquatic life may have been impacted. Until researchers are able to survey firsthand now and in the fall which species remain in the stream, it is impossible to know what was affected.

"If I go out and I dip my cup in the water, that's only going to tell me what's happening in the water at that moment," FOC Executive Director Amanda Pitzer said. "When we are able to go out and see the bugs and the fish — they have to live there, so they give you a more holistic view of long-term what's been happening in that river stream."

In early March, rainfall and snowmelt caused 6,200 gallons per minute of highly acidic water to discharge from the former T&T Mine. The site typically treats about 4,200 gallons of water per minute and can sustain up to 7,600 gpm; however, the sudden increase led the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection Muddy Creek Pipeline and T&T Treatment Plant to fail.

This allowed more than one million gallons of highly acidic water to bypass the plant over the course of the event.

Terry Fletcher, WVDEP acting communications director, said stream conditions for Muddy Creek and the Cheat River returned to normal a few days later, and the pH of Muddy Creek returned back to preferred water quality limits.

"We have a lot to lose now," Pitzer said. "And we need to fight to protect that."

What the test results conducted by FOC may reveal

Although water quality returned to normal, Pitzer said water chemistry results recently retrieved by FOC show the discharge may have had a severe impact on the stream's aquatic life.

Aluminum and iron are two types of metals found in acid mine drainage to which some aquatic species are highly sensitive.

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