Shepherd student 2nd in fiction writing

Paul Kessler's short story, "The Water Beneath," placed second in the West Virginia Fiction Competition. The selection was made by writer Ron Rash, who is the 2011 Appalachian Heritage Writer-in-Residence at Shepherd University in Shepherdstown.

Kessler is a 2006 graduate of South Charleston High School and a senior at Shepherd, majoring in English and creative writing. In his critique, Rash summed up Kessler's story as "All in all, a beautiful, heart-wrenching story of what Faulkner called 'the heart in conflict with itself.' Bravo!"

Kessler is the son of George Kessler and Michelle Ware, both of Charleston.
Local business chips in

Salon of Style hosts Dazzling Divas and Desserts

October 1, 2011
By Anna Brammeier - Journal staff writer, journal-news.net

MARTINSBURG - A Martinsburg salon recently was able to pamper some local young ladies during a special fundraiser event called Dazzling Divas and Desserts.

On Sept. 24, the Salon of Style Salon and Spa in Martinsburg hosted the event as a benefit for the Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Eastern Panhandle.

The five girls who came through the salon's front doors were greeted by the welcoming smiles of the staff and made to feel as comfortable as possible during their special makeover process. Those assisting owner Jessica Hanes were Cara Bauer, a licensed massage therapist, Samantha Carr, a hairstylist and Jennifer Wood, a close friend.

Wood helped the girls change into fuzzy robes and made sure they all had refreshments, which included chocolate-dipped strawberries, cookies and punch.

Hanes and her employees provided free makeovers for the girls who were a part of the mentoring program, and they donated the proceeds they received from any other makeup appointments scheduled that day to the organization.

Each girl received a complimentary 5-by-7-inch print of her glamour shot, courtesy of 2gether Again Photography, made up of the husband-and-wife team Don and Kelly Sowers. 2gether Again also donated 15 percent of the proceeds from any purchases of their photo packages.

Bauer gave free hand massages to all the girls and donated her chair massage proceeds to Big Brothers Big Sisters. The girls, ranging in age from 7 to 12, enjoyed picking out what color scarf and which accessory to wear for their photos, as well as which photo they liked the best.

Jeanne Flowers, the executive director of Big Brothers Big Sisters, was on hand observing the women and their charges. She had nothing but positive things to say about their partnership with Shepherd University's Big Ram, Little Ram program, which matches children with college-age students.

One student, April Blanchfield, who was matched with her “Little Sister” Aalayah, found out about the program through the Organization Fair held at Shepherd.

“I've worked with children at a day care for 12 years. I love children,” Blanchfield said about her decision to volunteer her time and energy for Aalayah.

One young girl, Summer, wore an uncertain look on her face while she had her hair and makeup done. But after viewing the final product in the mirror, a pleased smile crept to her lips.

The staff at Salon of Style and Spa worked to raise $150 for Big Brothers Big Sisters, but Hanes, her staff and the photography team were more focused on bringing smiles to the girls’ faces; and they
achieved success.

The Salon of Style has been in operation for four years.

"We have a good group, we have fun, we get along," Hanes said.

More information on the salon, at 39 Alkens Center, Martinsburg, can be found online at salonofstyle.com.

More information about 2gether Again Photography is available at 2getheragainweddings.com, and more information about the Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Eastern Panhandle program is available by calling 304-263-5522.
Statehouse beat: Civil War concerns become reality

By Phil Kabler

Did the West Virginia Sesquicentennial Commission, to use the parlance of kids today, get punked by the organizers of the Guyandotte Civil War Days?

Quick refresher: Back over the winter, most of the Civil War experts on the panel resigned in a dispute with state officials on the commission -- namely Culture and History Commissioner Randall Reid-Smith and Education and the Arts Secretary Kay Goodwin -- over the group’s mission.

The academies wanted to emphasize efforts to educate the public about the war and its causes; Reid-Smith and Goodwin thought it should be a grant-awarding agency to fund re-enactments, festivals and parades.

For those who resigned, like Shepherd University’s Mark Snell, the concern was not only that it is improper to treat the 150th anniversary of the nation’s bloodiest conflict as a celebration, but those events misinform the public. For example, he noted that battle re-enactments give the false impression that overweight middle-aged men fought the war.

Their concerns came to fruition back in May, when the organizers of the Guyandotte Civil War Days sought a grant to underwrite this fall’s event. Commission members took issue with one of the planned speakers, H.K. Edgerton, a pro-Confederate author and lecturer who contends that a large number of slaves “went to war with their masters” to fight against the Union Army.

At the time, the commission tabled the request because of the controversial nature of Edgerton. (Never mind that the overall theme of the event each year is pro-Confederate, this year with other featured performances being a Robert E. Lee portrayee, and a play titled, “Soldiers in Gray.”)

Their concern was because events that receive commission funding are required to feature the state sesquicentennial logo in advertising and promotional materials, it would appear to be an implicit state endorsement of Edgerton’s views.

In August, the organizers of the Guyandotte event resubmitted the funding request with Edgerton’s appearance omitted.

The commission approved awarding $1,715 of taxpayer funds for the event, with Goodwin noting at the time, “That speaker is no longer part of the application.”

Edgerton may not have been on the application, but he’s on the schedule of events for this year’s Guyandotte Civil War Days, Nov. 4-6 -- a schedule that on the organization’s website now bears the state sesquicentennial logo -- and the state’s implicit blessing.

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Speaking of Reid-Smith, while acting as governor, Earl Ray Tomblin has not made any widespread personnel changes, but observers believe that could change, starting Oct. 5, including a list of Manchin appointees who serve primarily because of their ties to former Gov. Joe Manchin.

That list includes: Mark Anthony Manchin, executive director of the School Building Authority (and Joe Manchin’s cousin); Mark Julian, deputy director of the West Virginia Development Office and Manchin family friend; Chris Jarrett, executive director of Water Development Authority and close Manchin friend; Jim Pitrolo, executive director of Health Care and Manchin family friend; FrankJezioro, Division of Natural Resources director and friend of Manchin; Reid-Smith, commissioner of Culture and History and close friend of Joe’s wife, Gayle Manchin; Mary Jo Thompson, director of Community Development for the state Development Office and
Manchin's niece, Joe Manchin IV, member of the West Virginia Tourism Commission, and Manchin's son -- as well as Gayle Manchin on the state Board of Education.

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I was gratified by the many positive responses on last week's column regarding academics at West Virginia University, like this email from George Mosko a DHHR family support specialist in Princeton: "Why don't you send a copy of this article on WVU academics to the president of the SEC and ACC? It says it all -- my son just recently graduated from the WVU College of Law and, yes, passed the bar exam on his first attempt ..."

Likewise, Charleston City Councilman Andy Richardson forwarded a copy of a column he had written on the topic.

"WVU is the beacon of hope for many, many high school graduates in West Virginia (as well, of course, enrollment each year from all 50 states)," he wrote. "Because our land-grant mission of service to our state ... there are students accepted who would probably not be accepted in some other major universities. We do not apologize for giving these young people an opportunity to succeed."

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Finally, one last question about the special gubernatorial election: Did the folks at Public Policy Polling forget the election is Tuesday?

In these days of limited resources for media outlets, the Raleigh, N.C.-based automated polling firm has been the closest thing to a nonpartisan pollster this campaign.

PPF last conducted a poll of the special election over the Labor Day weekend, and released the results Sept. 6.

On Thursday, PPF announced it would do another poll of the West Virginia election over the weekend, and sought suggestions for poll questions on its website.

Normally, PPF releases poll results Tuesdays -- which would be smack in the middle of Election Day. Even if it comes out later Monday, many voters may end up seeing the actual results of the election before they ever run across the poll results.

Reach Phil Kabler at ph...@wvgazette.com or 304-348-1220.
WV Special Election Voting Begins Tuesday

SHEPHERDSTOWN, W.V.A - The West Virginia special election for Governor is Tuesday. It’s the end of a special election cycle that started when Senator Robert Byrd passed away last year and then-Governor Joe Manchin took his place.

Officials are setting up polling places for voters to decide who will take office as Governor.

"Since early voting started September 21st we’ve seen a lot more on television and voters have told us they’re receiving phone calls from different organizations reminding them to get out and vote," says Bonnie Woodfall, Berkeley County Chief Deputy of Voter Registration.

The front-runners are acting Governor Earl Ray Tomblin and his Republican challenger, businessman Bill Moloney. It’s a close race.

"Some of the polling indicates Maloney is in shooting distance of him," says Mark Stern, a professor at Shepherd University.

There are three other candidates on the ballot as well; Bob Henry Baber is the Mountain Party candidate with an environmental and health care reform focus. Independent Marla Ingeis is running on a platform of education reform. Harry Bertram is the American Third Position candidate, a party that says the government discriminates against whites.

"What’s most unusual about this particular special election is that it’s only for one year," says Stern. "So the advantage to the winner is that the winner comes to the special election as an incumbent."

Since Senator Byrd passed away, approval ratings of Congress and the President have dropped even lower. Experts are saying if that voter dissatisfaction carries over to the state level it could have a big impact on the special election.

Stern says the question of experience may also be a major issue. Tomblin came to the Governor's office as President of the West Virginia Senate. Maloney, who founded a drilling company, has never held political office. Stern gives the edge to Tomblin.

It all depends on the voters to get out and cast their ballots. Voting precincts open at 6:30 a.m. Tuesday and close at 7:30 p.m.
Shepherd OKs salary increase, enhancement

October 4, 2011  0 Comments

The Shepherd University Board of Governors approved a resolution presented by Dr. Suzanne Shipley, president of Shepherd, to provide a 2 percent aggregate salary increase effective Oct. 17 and a 1.5 percent temporary salary enhancement. The salary increase will be allocated for faculty employed as of June 30, 2011 and classified employees before Oct. 15, 2010. The 1.5 percent temporary salary enhancement will be administered from reserve funds, paid out to employees in five payments beginning Oct. 31 and ending Dec. 31, reverting to effected employees’ base salaries effective Jan. 1, 2012.

Shipley commended the faculty and staff at Thursday’s meeting for successful accreditation for nursing and education as well as updating the curriculum.

“It’s been a daunting year with lots of hard work. I just want everyone to know that the board appreciates the type of effort that it took to create the results that we are now tracking this year,” Shipley said.

Two new members were sworn in at Thursday’s meeting. Elizabeth Greer, the board’s student representative, is a junior political science major from Martinsburg. She is the vice president of the Student Government Association, a member of the Student Ambassador Association, and vice president of Sistaz. Holly McCall, a Jefferson County native, is the co-founder and chief executive officer of KRM Associates, Inc., a health information technology consulting firm located in Shepherdstown. In January, 2003, KRM founded their Student Intern Program (SIP) helping to place Shepherd University information technology students in intern positions at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. McCall graduated from Shepherd in 2004 as a non-traditional student, studying visual communications, graphic design. She currently serves on the board of the Shepherd University Alumni Association.

The board also approved the West Virginia Route 480 underpass, a $4.1 million project to connect east and west campuses, which is set to begin in February, 2012. The project has received a $400,000 appropriation from the United States Department of Transportation, which was facilitated by Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito.

The next meeting of the Board of Governors will be held Nov. 17.
Rice to head lifelong learning program

October 4, 2011 0 Comments

Karen Rice, of Martinsburg, has been named the director of Lifelong Learning at Shepherd University. Rice holds a bachelor of science degree in finance from Virginia Commonwealth University and is working on her master of business administration at Shepherd. A board member of the Contemporary American Theater Festival at Shepherd, Rice works in the Academic Advising Center at the university. She had been a trust officer with BB&T in Charleston.

“We are fortunate to have Karen Rice heading up this new initiative,” said Diane Melby, vice president for advancement. “Her education, experience, and ties to the local community will help her develop course topics and attract knowledgeable teachers.”

The Lifelong Learning program at Shepherd will offer noncredit courses to adults. A committee was formed in the spring to survey the needs and interests of the community for adult education topics. Classes to be offered starting Oct. 4 include Afghanistan and its Neighbors with Grant Smith; Holocaust: A Study in Human Behavior with Robbye Horowicz; Literature: Excerpts from Abolitionist Writers with Sara Smith; West Virginia Politics with Rep. John Doyle (Jefferson-D) and Rep. Walter Duke (Berkeley-R); Poetry with Philip Butfithis; Family History 101 with Sandy Donahue; and West Virginia History with Bill Drennen.

Individual class cost is $99 per class. Semester memberships are available for $249 and entitle members to attend any or all courses offered during the semester. An annual membership is also available for $449.

For more information about Shepherd’s Lifelong Learning program, contact Rice at 304-876-5135 or by e-mail to krice@shepherd.edu or visit the website at www.shepherd.edu/lifelonglearning.
Neighors – Kearneysville

October 4, 2011  0 Comments

Blessing of the Animals
Lanky, Goldie, Allie, Truman and Sammy joined the congregation Sunday at the Grace Reformed United Church of Christ for the Blessing of the Animals with Pastor David Beeson. These four legged friends were so well behaved and to have them a part of the service was a blessing. With the inclement weather outside, the blessing was held in the sanctuary. Photos of other pets honored and in memory were displayed. Each pet received a treat from Beeson.

Appalachian Heritage Week
This past week Shepherd University celebrated Appalachian Heritage week with various activities taking place. I had the pleasure of reading one of my poems “The Apple Seed” on Thursday during the Master Writer’s class with special guest writer in residence Ron Rash, winner of the Appalachian Heritage Writer’s award. Writers of poetry, prose, fiction and non-fiction were eligible for this and had their works critiqued by Rash and Shurbitt in addition to remarks from the class participants. Rash was presented the Heritage award later in the evening by Dr. Sylvia Shurbitt. Shepherd University president Dr. Suzanne Shipley gave a welcome and opening remark. Rash spoke on the “ Burning Bright”: The Language and Storytelling of Appalachia.

Presentations of the 2011 WV Fiction Competition Awards were presented by Rash: 1st place – Jim Koenig, Harpers Ferry, “Carry Me to the River”; 2nd place – Paul Kesseler, Shepherdstown, “The Water Beneath”; 3rd place – Michelle Yost, Shenandoah Junction, “The Transformation of Acteon”; and Jeremiah Shelor, Morgantown for “The Tragedy of Woodrow Monroe.” In addition, four finalist names were announced. The Appalachian Heritage project was developed by the Shepherd University Department of English and Modern Languages, with support from the West Virginia Humanities Council.

4-H Kickoff “Big Day”
Sunday, October 9, 4-H Members, leaders, clover buds and others will kick off the new Jefferson County 4-H year. The event will be held at South Jefferson Elementary School from 2 – 4 p.m. The theme this year is “Welcome”, not only for new 4-H members to join a club, but the arrival of the new 4-H Agent Shey McNeil who comes to Jefferson County via Nicholas County in West Virginia. McNeil has been employed in Germany for the past couple of years.

The young people are encouraged to submit a poster using the theme “Welcome.” The judge will pick a first, second and third place winner in the Senior, Junior and Clover buds. Featured this year for the young people to participate in will be an obstacle course, crafts, singing, tug of war and others.

Leaving you with this thought: Don’t ever take a fence down until you know why it was put up. That’s all for this week.
Investing in local students

October 4, 2011 0 Comments

Shepherdstown financial expert’s partnership with Shepherd will help rural Americans

christine miller ford
Special to the Spirit

SHEPHERDSTOWN — Decades into his career as a successful certified financial planner, Rob Hoxton is seeing a new level of satisfaction as the program he’d dreamed of for years gets off the ground at Shepherd University here.

Hoxton, who founded Hoxton Financial Inc. in Shepherdstown in 1992, on Thursday will be recognized at a private reception hosted by Suzanne Shipley, the university’s president.

Thanks to the program envisioned years ago by Hoxton to train financial planners for underserved rural America, students at Shepherd now can choose to major in business administration with a concentration in financial planning.

By establishing the Rural Financial Planning Project, Hoxton is pursuing what he sees as his professional mission: to make better rural Americans’ lives by promoting financial literacy and helping to train ethical financial planning professionals to deliver financial services in rural areas.

Those who complete Shepherd’s program will have under their belts the prerequisite schooling needed to take the Certified Financial Planning certification exam.

The school’s new program, which is overseen by Hoxton and other local professional advisers involved with the Rural Financial Planning Project, earlier this year won formal approval from the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards Inc.

Hoxton continues to lay groundwork to help the program at Shepherd grow.

“We have four corporate sponsors now,” he said. “We have 15 students at SU who are in the process of forming the Financial Planning Club.”

More than $61,500 has been raised in donations and pledges to support the program, Hoxton said. The RFPP will provide professional mentoring and internships to students involved in the program as well as scholarships to help with the cost of tuition.

Last month, Hoxton and Gordon DeMeritt, the chairman of the business administration department at Shepherd, traveled to San Diego to make additional connections and talk about the program during the annual national conference of the Denver-based Financial Planning Association. Hoxton last year was elected to that association’s board of directors.

Shepherd spokeswoman Valerie Owens said that DeMeritt, Shipley and Hoxton are scheduled to share their thoughts on the program during Thursday’s reception.

At the time the program was announced in the spring, Monica Lingenfelter, executive vice president of the Shepherd University Foundation, called it a wonderful example of influential members of the community can work together to inspire and assist Shepherd students.

“The Rural Financial Planning Project advisory board brings together a dynamic group of professionals to mentor our CFP students. With the Foundation’s organizational support and Dr. Gordon DeMeritt leading the business faculty, the RFPP board is providing significant scholarship support, funding for faculty development, mentoring and internships right out of the gate.

“All of this translates to outstanding career opportunities for our graduates in a highly respected and lucrative profession.”

For details on the Rural Financial Planning Project, see www.ruralplanner.com. For information on Hoxton Financial Inc., with offices on Shepherdstown Pike and in Winchester, Va., and Hagerstown, Md., go to www.hoxtonfinancial.com.
Shep-or-Treat

Shepherd University's annual Shep-or-Treat Halloween event, 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 26. Open to community members and those 14 and younger. Features carnival, haunted house, cookie-decorating contest. Admission is free. An all-you-can-eat dinner will precede the event from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. Cost for dinner is $7; $4 for ages 3 to 7. Shepherd University, off King Street, Shepherdstown. W.Va. Call 304-876-5172.
Retirees take advantage of SU program

Mike Cramer / Special to The Chronicle

POSTED: October 7, 2011

When Robbye Horowicz took a job teaching conversational English to German school children in 1961, she had no idea she would be the first to tell them about the Holocaust. While trying to explain why they may face some animosity overseas when traveling, the topic came up and Horowicz took the difficult task of explaining what happened to the sheltered children.

She has now been teaching about the Holocaust for 50 years, and her next set of students are Shepherdstown retirees.

Horowicz is one of several community members who will be offering their time to serve as instructors for Shepherd University’s new Lifelong Learning program. Lifelong Learning is a set of unaccredited classes for retirees from the community who wish to continue learning.

Tuesday, Oct. 4 marked the first day of a new semester for Lifelong Learning students. Classes consist of a wide variety of topics, from poetry to the geographical politics of Afghanistan as well as Horowicz’s class entitled “The Holocaust: A Study of Human Behavior.”

The program began with requests to Shepherd from a group called Shepherdstown Area Independent Living. SAIL wanted to establish a Lifelong Learning program similar to ones offered at other universities across the country. Shepherd then collaborated with SAIL, as well as an advisory board of faculty and community members, to develop a study which showed the feasibility of and the interest in such a program. The response they received was incredibly enthusiastic, according to Program Director Karen Rice.

Rice also stressed that this is not just a learning experience for community students but also a social
opportunity. Retirees who participate in the program will have an opportunity to discuss the program's many topics with each other.

"I'm relatively new to the area, and I thought this would be a good way to make some new friends while learning something new," Lifelong Learning student Austin Porter said.

Porter is taking the poetry and Holocaust courses. He said that he has always been a bit scared of poetry, and the course was perfect to wade into the subject.

"It forces you to think," Porter said.

One of the members of the advisory board who worked with Shepherd on developing the courses was Jack Young. Young is now a student of the program.

"It allows you to learn for the joy of learning," he said.

Young also said that there would be no grades or tests and that at the moment the courses are not accredited. At George Mason University, Young had participated in similar courses, which grew to have over 500 students. This is what encouraged him to pursue a similar program in Shepherdstown.

Already Lifelong Learning has attracted attention outside of Shepherdstown. Students from Hagerstown, Martinsburg and other surrounding areas are flocking to join in as well, according to Young.

The initial success of the program has led Shepherd to start planning a spring semester. Rice stated that she is already working on developing next year's courses, which will start March 6, 2012.

Though currently no college professors from Shepherd are teaching the courses, Rice said that most of the instructors are community members who have worked for other institutions. Rice also believes that all the instructors, like Horowitz, bring special experiences in their field, which make them more than fit to teach.

Those interested in the Lifelong Learning program must pre-register with the university. Individual classes cost $99 and semester memberships are available for $250, which entitle members to attend any of the course offerings for the entire semester.

For more information on the program and the courses offered go to [www.shepherd.edu/lifelonglearning/](http://www.shepherd.edu/lifelonglearning/).
Flagship schools need bigger guns

POSTED: October 7, 2011

Our "flagship" needs bigger guns. I'm not talking military policy; I'm talking higher education policy. Our state's flagship institution of higher learning, West Virginia University (WVU), needs some upgrades.

A "flagship" university is a state's principal public doctoral granting and research institution. In most states that institution is also a selective-admission institution.

WVU is one of the few flagship universities (of the 50 in the nation) that is essentially open-admission. Open-admission means that anyone with a high school degree may be admitted. A selective-admission institution requires more than that: be it high grades in high school or superior performance on a standardized test, usually the American College Test (ACT) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

Being an open-admission institution does not mean a school is an inferior one. Judged by the improvement in performance of the average student and success after graduation, WVU is very high-performing. Shepherd University is likewise an open-admission institution that is also a high-performing one.

But WVU is considered a weak school when compared to other flagship universities because it is, practically speaking, open-admission. I say practically speaking because it has recently raised its admission standards to the point where it is somewhat selective.

But I don't think WVU has raised them enough, and to the degree that it has raised them it has done so very quietly. So the world still perceives WVU as open-admission.

So what's wrong with being an open-admission institution? Generally speaking, nothing. I agree with the idea that everyone should be given a chance to prove himself or herself. Indeed, some folks who struggle in high school blossom in college. But a flagship university has a larger role than just educating the folks who wish to attend.

Many West Virginians who perform exceedingly well in high school want to attend a selective-admission college or university. West Virginia has no public institution of this type to attract them. So we lose many of them to out-of-state public universities. Once they go out of state to college, they tend to stay gone.

The PROMISE scholarship was designed to keep those folks here, and it has succeeded in keeping many of them here. But having a selective-admission public university will keep many more of them here. I'm not advocating making all of our colleges and universities selective admission. Most of them would still be open admission, including one large one (Marshall University).
If we were to have a selective-admission public university, it wouldn't necessarily have to be the flagship. But since our flagship is our largest school and therefore the one offering the greatest variety of academic offerings, it seems to me logical that it should be the one given the mission of keeping more of our "best and brightest" high school students here in our state.

Secondly, a state's commitment to education is judged to a very great degree by the perceived prestige of its flagship university. Two questions get asked: How selective are the admission standards and how powerful is the research effort?

WVU has made significant strides in the latter category in the past few years, partly due to actions by the legislature. It needs to do more, and I'm willing to help. Additional research dollars would indeed bring more prestige. And higher admission standards would bring greater prestige beyond what the additional research dollars would bring.

I was moved to write this column in part because of the most recent trashing of West Virginia education, this one related to college sports. The big-time college football powers are at it again, changing conferences to make more money. The Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) stole two members of the Big East Conference, The University of Pittsburgh and Syracuse University. The remaining Big East members (including WVU) wonder if their league can survive. That same ACC stole three schools from the Big East seven years ago.

On each of these two occasions there was much speculation about which members of the Big East the ACC would find attractive. On neither occasion was WVU given much of a chance. The pens and talking heads of sports almost universally decreed that WVU's academics were not strong enough for the ACC, which includes some very prestigious flagship universities like the University of Virginia, the University of Maryland and the University of North Carolina, as well as a few very hoity-toity private schools.

I would think sports writers and sportscasters would have better sense than to comment about anyone's "academics." Most of these folks don't speak or write proper American English.

Here's an example. "The Thundering Herd have the ball on the Mountaineer 41-yard line." Afficionados of the pigskin know that comes from this season's football game between the WVU Mountaineers and Marshall's large collection of buffalo (the "Thundering Herd").

Excuse me, but "thundering herd" is a collective, not a plural, and is therefore is properly treated as singular. So it (not they) correctly "has" (not "have") the ball. Sportscasters and writers do this all the time, yet they have the nerve to poo-poo West Virginia education.

WVU's academic standards have nothing to do with the ACC's lack of interest. WVU's real problem in sports is that it's not in a major media market. But I think it's important to West Virginia's economic future that we make the changes necessary to prevent future sportscasters and writers from pretending the problem is somehow related to "academics."

West Virginia gets unfairly knocked about poor education more than any other state. We need to improve our education statistics for substantive reasons. And improving the substance will improve the perception.