

The PRESTON COUNTY News

GOD BLESS AMERICA

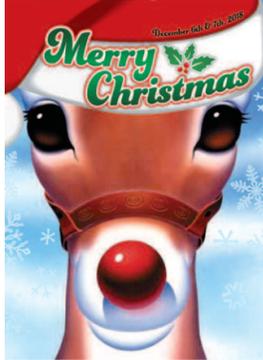
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INSIDE

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE



SPORTS



Preston girls basketball team drops season opener to Buckhannon, 56-30.

Page B1

ON THE WEB

ONLINE POLL

Do you think Michael Cohen's guilty plea for lying to Congress regarding Trump's alleged Russian business ventures will impact the President?

- A) No. Trump's Russia business dealings existed before his candidacy for president.
B) No. Trump is a master in dealing with innuendo, drama and conflict. He often uses it to his advantage.
C) Yes. Now that the Democrats hold the majority in the House, Trump can expect an increase of congressional investigations targeting his administration.
D) Yes. The investigation and the mid-term election outcomes will make it more difficult for Trump to get his agenda through Congress.

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INDEX

- Calendar A7
Classified B6-9
Crossword & Games B9
Obituaries A7
Opinion A8
Sports B1-2

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Committee begins school levy campaign



File photo by Joseph Hauger

Preston County Schools Superintendent Steve Wotring says supporters must deliver a positive message as the school system attempts the third excess levy passage since 2016.

by Theresa Marthey STAFF WRITER

KINGWOOD — Positivity, communication and dispelling myths are the keys to passing an excess levy for schools in February, a committee concluded Monday.

Preston County Schools will be placing a five-year, \$22.5 million cumulative excess levy before voters in a Feb. 2 special election.

"I think all of us know how we got here with declining revenue and enrollment," Superintendent Steve Wotring said. "Enrollment is declining throughout the state, and that means declining funding."

Wotring explained to the nearly 40 people in attendance Monday that declining enrollment and revenues led to the recommendation to close Fellowsville Elementary School and Rowlesburg School.

Because the public continued to ask the Preston County Board of Education to run another levy right up to the point at which the board would have voted on closing the schools, a decision was made Nov. 11 to attempt the levy.

The last levy vote in May 2017 failed by less than 100 votes.

Wotring said one thing the committee and people need to understand is this is not a levy specifically for Fel-

lowsville and Rowlesburg.

"The first thing about this whole thing that we have got to debunk is this is not a levy for Rowlesburg and Fellowsville. This is not for two schools," Wotring said. "It does not mention schools in the levy wording — this is for the entire county."



Jennings

Craig Jennings said he would like to see the committee talk about how the levy would make Preston schools more competitive with others surrounding the county.

"We need to make this not the school board's levy; it's not Steve Wotring's; it's not Brad Martin's; it's not Craig Jennings'; it is the people's levy," Jennings said.

Modern Homestead co-owner Trelis Smith recommended the committee use Facebook and the live feed and video available on the platform to promote the levy.

Wotring said he had thought about that and is planning on using the social media platform in January to discuss each section of the levy.

See LEVY, A3

Commission approves temporary change of dozen voting precincts

Not all regular polling places available for Feb. 2 levy vote

by Theresa Marthey STAFF WRITER

KINGWOOD — Preston County commissioners approved temporary relocation of several voting precincts for the Feb. 2 school excess levy election.

According to Preston County Clerk Linda Huggins, several of the regular voting precincts have been "winterized" and thus will not be available in



Huggins



Staff photo by Theresa Marthey

County Commissioners Dave Price, left, and Don Smith approve the temporary movement of 12 voting precincts for the Feb. 2 levy vote.

early February. "The Board of Education quickly found other locations for those precincts," Huggins said.

One of the precincts is not in the same community where it is located, but Huggins said the situation is considered an emergency, so it is permitted.

Huggins was referring to Precinct 6, normally located in the Lenox Community Building. Those voters will go to the North Preston Senior Citizens Center at 13549 North Preston Highway in Bruceton Mills for this vote.

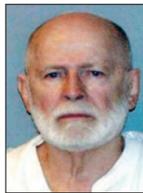
See VOTING, A3

Congressional representatives seeking to address issues at Hazelton, other prisons

by Conor Griffith NCWV MEDIA

HAZELTON — Federal lawmakers representing North Central West Virginia say they are working to address conditions at federal prisons in the wake of problems plaguing institutions such as the Federal Correctional Complex at Hazelton.

Three inmates have died at the prison this year, with the most recent and highest profile death being the Oct. 30 murder of convicted mobster James "Whitey" Bulger within hours of his transfer to the maximum-security portion of the facility. He was previously a pris-



Bulger

oner at FCC Coleman in Florida before being transferred to Hazelton. On Nov. 27, two correctional officers at Hazelton were injured after an inmate who appeared to be under the influence of an unknown substance began fighting with prison staff when they attempted to restrain him.

That incident, as well as the prisoner deaths, has been attributed to chronic understaffing at the medium-security

prison, which has been reported to be at the dangerously low level of 721 personnel, compared to 880 last year.

"Despite the seriousness of the (Nov. 27) incident, the warden refused to secure the facility and continued running the prison as if nothing had happened," FCC Hazelton Local 420 President Richard Heldreth told WVNews.com. "This is another example of the violence that is plaguing the Hazelton complex caused by understaffing and the failure of the administration to properly respond to incidents like this."

See PRISONS, A3



Photo courtesy of Darla Moyers

Marvin Wotring crafts a Buckwheat Festival rifle.

Marvin Wotring, maker of Buckwheat Festival rifles, dies at age of 78

by Theresa Marthey STAFF WRITER

MORGANTOWN — Morgantown gunsmith Marvin Wotring, who built the commemorative rifles raffled off during the Preston County Buckwheat Festival for decades, died Sunday in his Morgantown home. He was 78.

During the Buckwheat Festival, Wotring could be found in the fire truck bay under the Community Building, selling raffle tickets on the two rifles and also selling knives he would handcraft.

The 77th annual Buckwheat Festival general chairwoman, Darla Moyers, remembered Wotring as a loving, caring gentleman.

"He was one of us," Moyers said. "He was a part of the Buckwheat Festival just as everyone else."

Moyers said Wotring began crafting flintlock rifles for the festival back in 1976, and in 1982, he also made a pistol.

"He made eight flintlock pistols for us, and the last 28 years,

he made a percussion rifle in addition to the flintlock rifle," she said. "He would donate one to the festival, and the fire department would purchase the other to raffle off."

All in all, Wotring crafted 78 guns for the festival until 2017, when he told the fire department it would be his last year to make the rifles because he was going to retire.

"He recommended some people who made quality guns, and we contracted with a gentleman from Fairmont to make the rifle," Moyers said.

Wotring learned to build rifles and muzzleloaders at the Preston County Educational Center by taking a night class for adults in 1974.

In a 2017 interview, Wotring talked about how he built the one-of-a-kind firearms, etching the year and the event on the metal barrel.

He sourced the stock for the rifles from local sawmills.

See WOTRING, A3

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