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Turning Point

Monongalia County sees paradigm shift in its economic development

by **Conor Griffith**
BUSINESS EDITOR

WESTOVER — Officials and business leaders in Monongalia County remain optimistic that the development seeds planted years ago will continue to bear fruit thanks to some high-profile announcements and a shift in the way certain things are done.

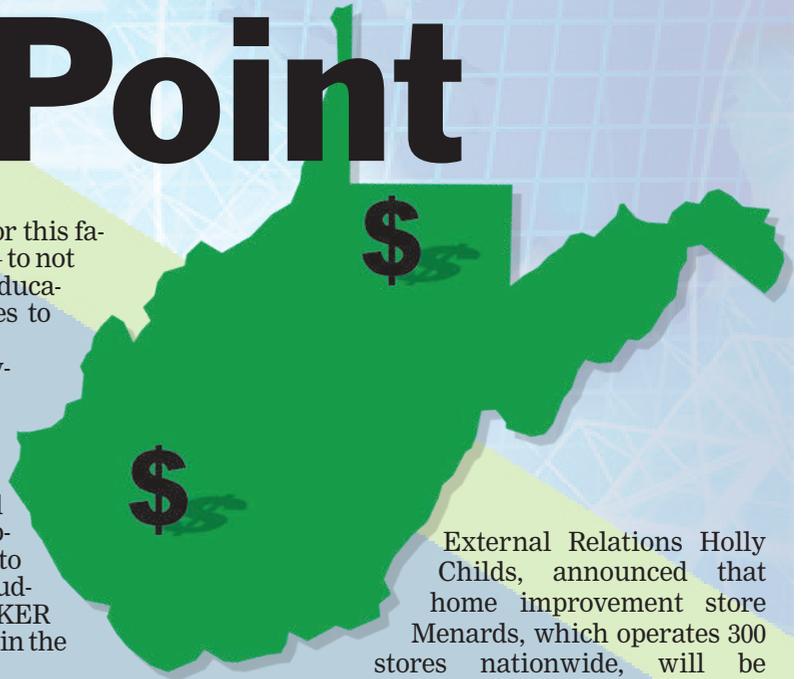
It was announced recently that Bass Pro Shops will set up its first location in West Virginia at the WestRidge development off Interstate 79. Although smaller than the Cabela's in Ohio County, the new store will sell boats and other outdoor adventure vehicles.

Johnny Morris, the founder of Bass Pro Shops and

an avid conservationist, said he plans for this facility — which will employ 100 people — to not just be a store, but also a community educational asset that will introduce families to fishing and all things outdoors.

“West Virginia, the Monongahela River area and nearby southwestern Pennsylvania are some of the best regions in the country for fishing, hunting and outdoor recreation,” he said at the announcement. “We are thrilled to be part of this fantastic new development in Morgantown and look forward to bringing our iconic outdoor brands, including Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's and TRACKER Boats and ATVs, to outdoor enthusiasts in the area.”

The decision to locate a Bass Pro Shops retail center in Monongalia County was only the latest announcement. In June, Gov. Jim Justice visited the development site and, together with WestRidge Director of Business Development and



External Relations Holly Childs, announced that home improvement store Menards, which operates 300 stores nationwide, will be coming to Monongalia County. Like the Bass Pro Shops situation, this will be the first Menards to locate in the Mountain State.

See **SHIFT, 5**

Chemicals & tech driving Charleston area growth

by **Conor Griffith**
BUSINESS EDITOR

CHARLESTON — While some historic industries continue to drive economic growth in Kanawha County, the area is also reaping the benefits of technology and the state's educational institutions.

As the state capital, governmental functions have always been a key component of the local economy. However, Charleston Area Alliance President and CEO Matthew Ballard said the city is also the metropolitan hub of Southern West Virginia, which means a lot of people commute from neighboring



Ballard

counties for employment, financial and health-care needs. As time has gone by, collaborations between the city, the West Virginia Development Office and the Charleston Area Alliance have attracted new drivers of economic development.

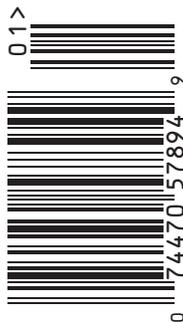
One of the more high-profile examples is the advent of Infor, a technology company that develops business cloud software products for companies in industry-specific markets. Ballard said Infor is currently in the process of renovating an entire floor of Laidley Tower in downtown Charleston which will run cloud applications for federal government agencies and their contractors when ready to go.

“They've hired 25 or so folks already, and they're residing in temporary spaces until their offices are completed, which is expected by the end of the year, and their commitment was to 100 new jobs,” he said. “It's exciting to have them. They're a huge global company, so for them to have a footprint in our capital city, I think, is important.”

Ballard noted that while Infor might be the latest big tech company to come to Kanawha County, it's by no means the first.

“In late, late 2017, N3, which is also a global company with about 1,500 people, they announced that they were coming to the West Virginia Regional Technology Park there in South Charleston,” he said, “and to date since their announcement, they've hired 175 people.”

See **CHARLESTON, 3**



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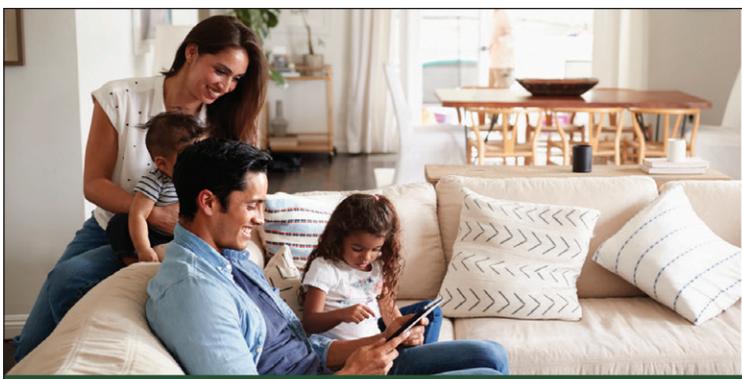
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