



Herbert Henderson **Office *of* Minority Affairs**

Annual Report 2024

Presented to

Governor Patrick Morrisey

Prepared by

Jill Upson, MBA

Executive Director

Email: Jill.S.Upson@wv.gov

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Mission

The Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs is committed to serving and assisting all underserved citizens across West Virginia and developing innovative ways to address issues affecting minority populations through conversation, education, leadership, and collaboration.

Executive Director

Jill Upson, MBA

Executive Assistant to the Director

Open

Part-Time Administrative Assistant

Rojen Morris

This annual report is hereby submitted to the Governor of West Virginia, the Honorable Patrick J. Morrisey and the members of the Joint Select Committee on Minority Issues of the West Virginia Legislature. As part of the public domain, this report also serves the purpose of informing all agency stakeholders and interested members of the public of the activities and goals of the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs.

This report is available in electronic format at: <https://minorityaffairs.wv.gov>

Message from the Executive Director



With the close of 2024, I am pleased to reflect on all that the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs (HHOMA) has accomplished on behalf of the people of West Virginia. This year brought new challenges, created new opportunities for collaboration, and further solidified our commitment to our mission.

Throughout the year, HHOMA continued to serve people in all 55 West Virginia counties. As a vital resource to historically and currently underserved populations, we combined critical constituent services with consequential public forums and transformative cultural events to further expand our robust outreach efforts. These are just a few examples of how HHOMA works every single day to unite and strengthen our communities.

None of the meaningful work that we do at HHOMA would be possible without the support of the Governor of West Virginia, the West Virginia Legislature, and a host of agencies and organizations that stand alongside us as we fulfill our mission. It is an honor to partner with them throughout the year.

The Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs welcomes the opportunity to continue to serve, inform, and collaborate with West Virginia's minority populations as we look ahead to 2025. Serving as your executive director since December 2018 has been as rewarding as it is challenging and I look forward to taking on brand new challenges in the year ahead. Thank you for your support of this agency and its work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill Upson". The signature is fluid and cursive, matching the printed name below it.

Jill Upson, MBA
Executive Director

Sponsorships

Per West Virginia State Code 5-26-1, HHOMA identifies and promotes best practices in the provision of programs and services to minorities. Occasionally, this will include providing sponsorships to community-based organizations when funds are available. The requests that were received and funded in 2024 include:

Antioch Missionary Baptist Church

God With Her annual women's workshop and empowerment conference

Aspire Achievement Project

Joy is Our Journey Bus Tour & Conference

Beckley Juneteenth Festival

20th Beckley Juneteenth Festival

Downtown Charleston Association

Holly Jolly Brawley tree

Filipino-American Association of West Virginia

Heritage Awards Night

Filipino-American Association of West Virginia

2024 Filipino American Heritage Month Festival

Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission

Annual MLK Day Ecumenical Service, Symbolic March, and Bell Ringing Ceremony

Martinsburg High School

Latino Student Union's "Loteria Night" Hispanic Heritage Celebration

Multifest 33

Multi-Cultural Festival of West Virginia

West Virginia Foreign Language Teachers Association

West Virginia World Language Showcase

West Virginia Humanities Council

McCreight Lecture in the Humanities series featuring Percival Everett

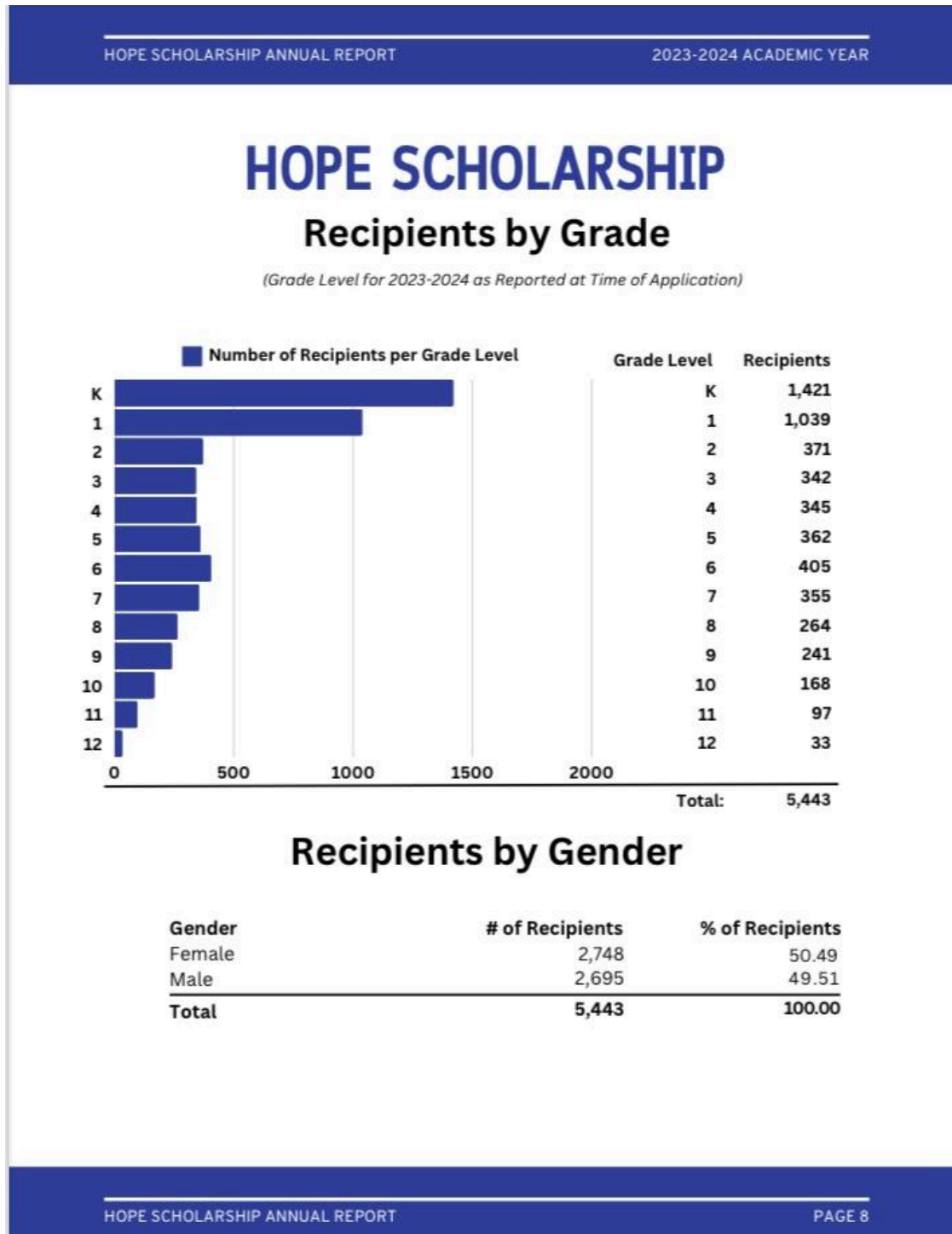
West Virginia Human Rights Commission

Governor's Annual Civil Rights Day

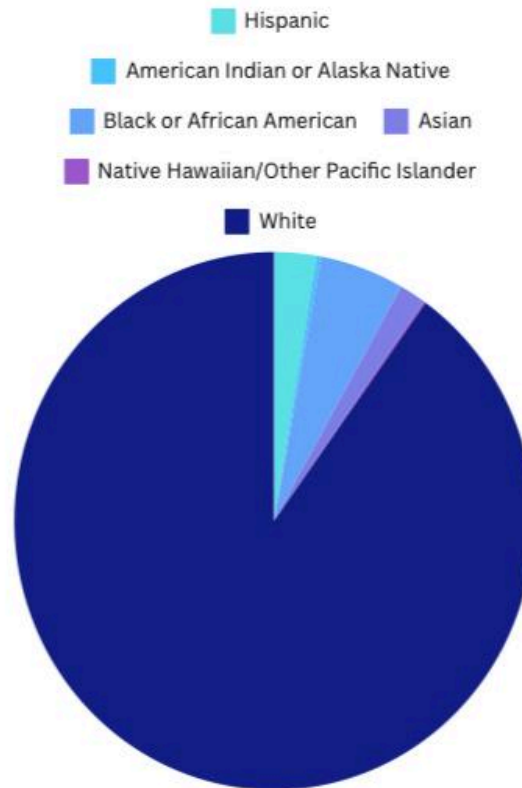
2024 Highlights

January

-Director Upson continued her work as a member of the HOPE Scholarship board of directors. She has advocated for equal access for historically underrepresented students. The most recent data below shows the following statistics by gender and race.



HOPE SCHOLARSHIP Recipients by Race



Race	# of Recipients	% of Recipients	WV Population*
Hispanic	143	2.63	2.20
American Indian or Alaska Native	15	0.28	0.30
Black or African American	285	5.24	3.80
Asian	90	1.65	0.90
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	7	0.13	< 0.50
White	4,903	90.08	92.80
Total	5,443	100.00	100.00

*West Virginia general population racial breakdown according to 2023 U.S. Census estimates.
Note: U.S. Census population estimates include 2.2% of population as "Two or More Races" which is not factored into Hope demographic data.

-Director Upson appears as a regularly scheduled guest on Panhandle Live and continues to make media appearances to share critical information about opportunities, resources, and events.

-As chair of the Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission, HHOMA's director, helped to organize and host the annual MLK student poster, essay, song, film awards luncheon. She also created the first ever 12-month calendar featuring student artwork. Twenty-nine awards were given to a total of forty-seven students from across the state.

-The 2024 MLK Day Ecumenical Service was held and featured Dr. Elisha Lewis, West Virginia State University Education Department professor, as keynote speaker.

-Director Upson continued her work as a designee of the Governor on the America 250th, (Semiquincentennial) Commission.

February

-HHOMA honored Black History Month with heavy social media content highlighting the contributions of individuals, communities, and industries that helped shape the history of West Virginia and the world.

-HHOMA celebrated one of the woman-owned, minority-owned businesses that received an expansion loan to open a beauty school through a connection made while attending HHOMA's Minority Business Expo.

-Director Upson held a virtual interview with History teacher, Ted Lamb who discussed how he incorporates the teaching of black history into all of his course modules.



-On behalf of the Governor, Director Upson addressed a full house at the Apollo Theatre in Martinsburg, WV for the premiere of the film documentary, *"The History of the Sumner Ramer School"*.

March

- HHOMA opened registration for its Spring Minority Business Expo to be held in Ranson, WV.
- In honor of Women's History Month, the agency shifted its social media focus to recognizing West Virginia women who have had a significant impact on the state's history.
- Director Upson worked closely with the West Virginia Women's Commission to host the 2024 Women's and Girls' Day at the Legislature event.

April

- Leading up to the Spring Minority Business Expo, HHOMA's director made in-person media appearances alongside event sponsors such as Black-Owned Berkeley County (BOBC).

-HHOMA hosted its annual Minority Business Expo which featured keynote speaker Clinton Arnold, West Virginia State University professor. The event also provided information in various topic areas by respected panelists from across business industries. A popular event feature were the complimentary professional headshots for all attendees.



- HHOMA announced Juneteenth headliners, Raheem DeVaughn and Glenn Jones, and put out a call for local performers and vendors to participate.
- Director Upson continued her work as a member of Marshall University's minority health advisory board and helped to promote the Minority Health Institute in Huntington.

May

-HHOMA kicked off the month of May by recognizing Jewish American Heritage Month, Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, and Military Appreciation Month.

-HHOMA finalized bookings, registrations, and logistics for June's Juneteenth event. The event brought in more than 30 vendors and live performances by 12 unique acts.

June

-HHOMA recognized the month of June as Caribbean American Heritage month.

-HHOMA sponsored the Aspire Achievement Project event: "Joy Is Our Journey" Bus Tour & Conference.

SAVE

**JOY IS OUR
JOURNEY
DREAM
TOUR**



THE

DATE

6/12/24

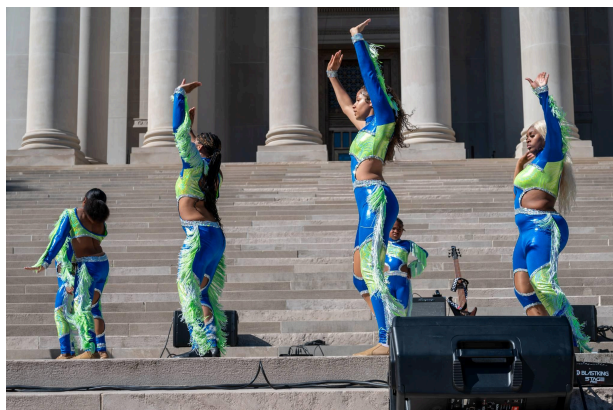
**Charleston
Coliseum &
Convention**



Juneteenth

-On Saturday, June 15, HHOMA hosted its annual Juneteenth Celebration at the Capitol. The event featured numerous performing artists, vendors and food trucks, and kids' bicycle raffles.

The featured headliners were national recording artists, Glenn Jones and Raheem DeVaughn.



-Director Upson continued to work on the West Virginia Broadband Workforce Development Council. The federal government awarded West Virginia \$1.2 billion to connect unserved and underserved communities to high-speed and reliable Internet service. The five-year action plan that she contributed to was approved by the National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA).

July

-HHOMA announced the launch of the 2024 statewide listening tour scheduled to take place from July through October. The stops include Montgomery, Mount Hope, Parkersburg, and Welch.

-Director Upson led discussions on Stop #1 of the 2024 Listening Tour in Montgomery, WV at a morning senior center visit and an evening general public session.



August

-HHOMA proudly sponsored the 34th annual Multifest at Haddad Riverfront from August 1 - 4.

-Director Upson traveled to Mount Hope to host the second of four stops on 2024's Listening Tour. In keeping with HHOMA's format, she held a senior citizens' session in the morning and finished up with a general public session in the evening.



-United States Senator, Shelley Moore Capito, invited Director Upson to participate in a roundtable discussion with Oscar Award-winning actress, Halle Berry. The discussion covered the stigma around menopause and the lack of trained professionals in this critical healthcare field.



Roundtable led by
Sen. Shelley Moore Capito
with Halle Berry

-Director Upson was honored to once again serve as a presenter at the Human Rights Commission's Governor's Civil Rights Day Awards ceremony held on August 23rd.

-HHOMA recognized August 26th as Katherine Johnson Day. This day was established by the Legislature in 2018 when Director Upson was an elected member of the West Virginia House of Delegates.



September

-Director Upson continued her work with the West Virginia Digital Identity Tech Hub (WVDITH) Consortium

-HHOMA made a Listening Tour stop in Parkersburg along with its agency partners. Citizens shared their concerns that were specific to their region.

-Hispanic Heritage Month was recognized by HHOMA with a Proclamation by the Governor.



-Director Upson traveled to the U.S. Capitol to attend the Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony honoring West Virginian, Katherine Johnson, Dr. Christina Darden, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson. These brilliant women all contributed to the success of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) program during the “Space Race”.

Pictured are:

➡ Top: America 250 Team: JT Jezierski, Lauren Allen, Senator Shelley Moore Capito, Secretary Randall Reid-Smith, and Executive Director Jill Upson

➡ Bottom left: Karen Diaz (WVU Libraries), Director Jill Upson, Senator Capito, and Paula Martinelli (WVU Libraries)

➡ Bottom right: Director Jill Upson and Senator Capito



**CONGRESSIONAL
GOLD MEDAL
CEREMONY**



SEPTEMBER 18, 2024
U.S. CAPITOL

October

-October was officially recognized as Filipino American History Month by HHOMA with a Proclamation by the Governor.

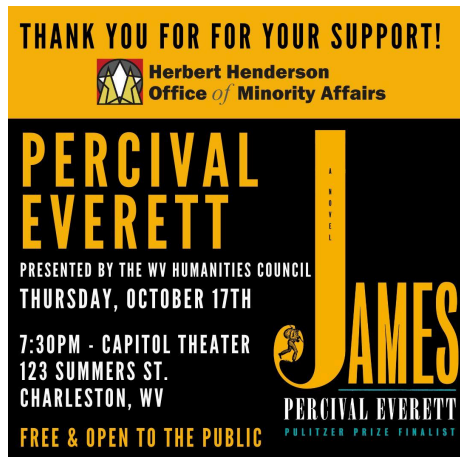
-HHOMA made its final stop on the 2024 statewide Listening Tour in Welch, WV.



-As chair of the Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission, Director Upson launched the campaign for the 2025 MLK poster, essay, song, and short film contests for students in grades K-12, calling for them to begin submitting their entries.

-HHOMA sponsored the McCreight Lecture featuring author Percival Everett. Dr. Everett spoke about his work as an author and professor and read excerpts from his most recent book,

“James”. This brilliant reimagining of Mark Twain’s, *“The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”*, is told from the perspective of Huck’s enslaved friend, Jim.



-HHOMA partnered with the Filipino American Association of WV in hosting the first-ever Filipino-American Festival at the Capitol. Approximately 1,000 people arrived from all over West Virginia and beyond to enjoy this groundbreaking cultural event.



-Director Upson was invited to deliver remarks at the FAB Institute of Beauty Ribbon Cutting. The owner of this new beauty school credits HHOMA's fall Minority Business Expo for connecting her with a lender who provided her small business expansion loan to open the school. This is just one example of the real-world impact that the agency has made in the lives of people in West Virginia.

Picture (l-r) are: Executive Director, Jill Upson and Administrative Assistant, Rojen Morris



-Director Upson continued her work on the Centennial Committee for Negro History Week/Black History Month under the leadership of President Brad Smith of Marshall University.

November

-HHOMA began November by recognizing Native American Indian Heritage Month.

-The MLK Commission continued to promote the annual Living the Dream awards with invitations for the public to continue to submit nominations.

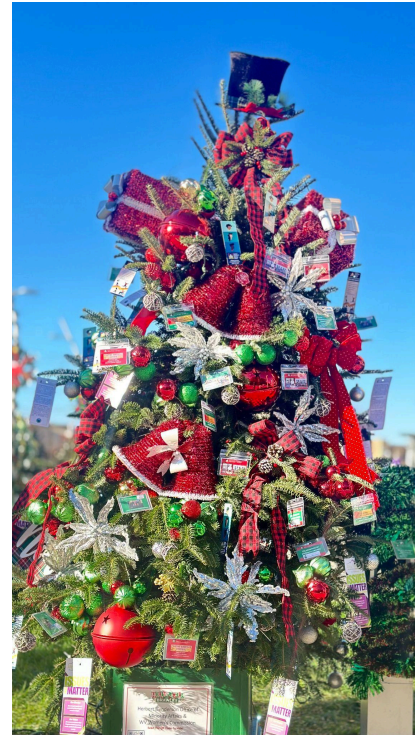
-Director Upson continued to appear on WEPM each month with hosts, Marsha Chwalik and Jordan Nicewarner to discuss the work of the agency and how it affects the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. One example that she highlighted was HHOMA's sponsorship of "Loteria Night" at Martinsburg High School.



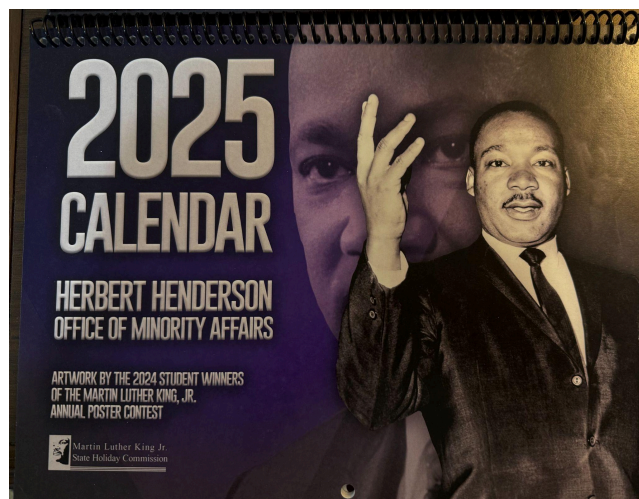
December

-Director Upson closed out an eventful year by appearing on the television show, “The Road Ahead”, hosted by Deputy Commissioner, Jacqueline Proctor of the West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services.

-HHOMA participated in downtown Charleston’s Holly Jolly Brawley by decorating a tree which featured the agency’s activities and services.



-Director Upson created a 2025 calendar using the artwork from the previous year’s student MLK poster award winners.



Appendix

Listening Tour Report



Herbert Henderson
Office *of* Minority Affairs

Listening Tour Report

2024

Prepared by

Jill Upson

October 18, 2024

Listening Tour Report

2024

On July 2, 2024, the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs (HHOMA) issued a news release announcing the launch of its 2024 statewide listening tour. West Virginia State Code §5-26-1 states that HHOMA “shall provide a forum for discussion of issues that affect the state’s minorities”. Accordingly, the Listening Tour’s scheduled stops were:

Montgomery	July 10, 2024
Mount Hope	August 6, 2024
Parkersburg	September 16, 2024
Welch	October 10, 2024

Individual news releases for each location were issued prior to the event, along with social media marketing and in-person flyer distribution. Each stop included a morning event at the local senior center and an evening event for the general public at a central location in each city.

The agency/organization partners who participated in some or all of this year’s tour include: Governor’s Constituent Services, James “Tiger” Morton Catastrophic Illness Commission, Marshall University Minority Health Institute, West Virginia Department of Agriculture, West Virginia Human Rights Commission, and the West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services.

HHOMA Executive Director Jill Upson facilitated the conversations at each of the eight (8) events by providing details about the Office of Minority Affairs and then introducing each agency partner to do the same. Following the introductions and explanations of services provided by each, Director Upson called for an extended period of comments and/or questions. Both the notes from these interactions and all written feedback forms have been compiled and the information contained therein typed into a spreadsheet for each location. Each spreadsheet is attached to this report for review.

Montgomery attendees identified fifteen (15) areas of concern or provided comment. While these areas were mostly heterogeneous, tourism, entertainment, and activities for young people emerged as a key theme.

Mount Hope’s most referenced concern was about the food desert that exists throughout the county. They would like to have a Farmer’s Market, even if it were only bi-weekly or monthly. The Mayor stated that there are several suitable locations for an indoor Farmers Market in the city of Mount Hope.

Parkersburg had a strong senior turnout. Economic issues dominated the discussion with concerns about housing, car repairs, and transportation. Additionally, several off-the-record conversations took place following the event regarding concerns about governance, management, and operations at the senior services center.

Lastly, the city of Welch had a significant senior turnout. Comments included both kudos and criticisms. The two most critical issues for the citizens were clearly medical care and safe drinking water.

Please see the included spreadsheets from each city visited for a full list of issues raised and key demographic data when provided.

Montgomery, WV July 10, 2024			
Tr Issue Raised	Tr Name / Contact Information	Tr Demographics	Tr Notes
Allowance to Seniors in Longterm Facilities Is Only \$50 Per Month: Has not been increased in over 20 years.	Lynn Elliott	Senior	Senior Center Director expressed a loss of dignity for seniors who are unable to purchase toiletries and other self-care items. She also highlighted the inability to buy Christmas gifts for grandchildren (one resident has 10 grandchildren) and other family members with such a low monthly allowance. She has been asking state legislators to address this issue for many years.
Carnival Access: WVU roadblock	N/A	General Public	Notes
Gymnasium: Challenge Academy backed out	N/A	General Public	Mayor Ingram, of Montgomery stated General Hoyer's replacement claims estimated annual pool maintenance in the tens of millions.
Tourism: Opportunity to include Montgomery on Black History Tour	N/A	General Public	Simmons - Black school; First Baptist Church - Owned by Bishop Isaac Woods
Stores closed: Whitesville	N/A	Senior	Notes
Healthcare: Lack	N/A	Senior	Notes
Staffing: All sectors	N/A	Senior	Notes
Happy For the Visit From the State	Carol Hardy Miller	Senior	"I was so glad to have the group to come to visit us. They all seemed so nice. They gave us so much kindness. I hope God is with them so very long. Carol Hardy Miller"
Live Entertainment; More Advanced Notice and Advertising of Forum	N/A	62 year old black male; Baptist	"These forums are very informative and gives us all a chance to hear how others feel and what they think and together we can develop good strategy to enhance the efforts and activity of Montgomery and surrounding areas."

Montgomery, WV July 10, 2024			
Tr Issue Raised	Tr Name / Contact Information	Tr Demographics	Tr Notes
Apathy in the Area, Use of Basi Center, African American Destination	N/A	68 year old black female; United Methodist	"Please come back to Montgomery and hold another listening session. I will be willing to assist getting people out."
Enjoyed the Event	N/A	54 year old black female, Christian	"Forum was great."
Activities For Youth	N/A	77 year old female	Notes

Mount Hope, WV August 6, 2024			
Tr Issue Raised	Tr Name / Contact Information	Tr Demographics	Tr Notes
No Grocery Store	Mary Gray	Senior	Notes
Lack of Local Food	N/A	Senior	Notes
Lack of Food, Abandoned Homes and Buildings, Lack of Transportation, Cleanliness of the County and Roadside Maintenance of Overgrowth	N/A	Female	Would like a Farmer's Market and for abandoned homes to be dealt with.
Lack of Community Activities	Michael Kincaid	Senior	Notes
Low Attendance at Evening Forum	N/A	70 year old caucasian female	"Thank you for coordinating these wonderful events!"

Parkersburg, WV September 16, 2024			
Tr Issue Raised	Tr Name / Contact Information	Tr Demographics	Tr Notes
People Do Not Know About Available Services and Programs	N/A	Senior	Notes
Legal Matter	N/A	Senior	Husband of 42 years had living will, however original will named first wife as beneficiary and the first wife received the marital home of 42 year wife when husband passed.
Homelessness	N/A	Senior	Senior attendee has organization called Essentiall Yours (essentially-yours.org) for homeless assistance.
Housing for Disabled Who Are Not Qualified as Low Income	N/A	Senior	Notes
Car Repair for Seniors	N/A	Senior	Notes
More Knowledge Spread	N/A	74 year old white female; Pentacostal	"Loved it. A lot of questions answered."
Unaware of Office of Minority Affairs	N/A	61 year old white female	Has concerns but did not bring list.
Housing For Disabled People	Josepha (Chris) Penn (678)492-6943	84 year old black female/ Apostolic	Caregiver for 27 yearold great grandson with TBI who is unable to live together in a senior facility due to regulations.
Enjoyed Forum	N/A	65 year old white male; Baptist	"Went well."
Minority Community Involvement	N/A	74 year old caucasian female	"This sounds self-serving but I was hping to connect with others who might have an interest in serving on the board of the Mid-Ohio Valley Multi-Cultural Festival. Need more advertisement of Listening Tour and announcement of the event. It is hard to get minorities in Parkersburg involved in anything. Very informative and good resources."

Welch, WV October 10, 2024			
Tr Issue Raised	Tr Name / Contact Information	Tr Demographics	Tr Notes
Unsung Heroes of State Government	Dr. Richard Reid	Senior	Tony O'Leary of the Department of Transit should be recognized for his commitment to serving WV seniors.
Water In Gary	N/A	Senior	It is expensive to have to use bottled water for cooking. The water also damages clothes when laundered.
Appreciate Governor Justice	N/A	Senior	Governor Justice made sure that southern WV was not forgotten during his term.
Welch Community Hospital	N/A	Senior	Strong concerns about access to healthcare and ambulance service. Panther is 1 hour from Welch and if hospital closes, there will be a 2-hour wait for an ambulance to Panther. Starling Heights is also 45 minutes from Welch.
Reimbursement Rates for food services at the Senior Center.	N/A	Senior	Largely funded by Lottery but should also be added to the state general fund.
Needs Medical Care Certainty and Dedicated Doctors	N/A	Black female	Notes
Cemetery Theft	N/A	Black female	Vases (\$1,000 each) stolen from the mausoleum. Also the cemetery does not fulfill its contracts by adding names to prepaid markers.
Sale of the Hospital; Delapidated Houses	N/A	71 year old black female	Notes
Unaware of the Office of Minority Affairs	N/A	73 year old female	Notes
Able to Voice Concerns; Would Attend Again	N/A	81 year old	Notes
Water in Gary	N/A	68 year old female	"Lots of information was given." Prayer and money would improve forum.

Welch, WV October 10, 2024			
Tr Issue Raised	Tr Name / Contact Information	Tr Demographics	Tr Notes
Making Sure People Know About Various State Services Available to Them.	N/A	70 year old Greek, Jewish, Black, Native American, & European Christian	"Great event! Nice people! Generous people!"
Hearing Concerns of Other People	N/A	Demographics	Homecoming Parade interfered with the forum.
Local Hospital; Transportation; Employment	N/A	Senior	"Very well-conducted" forum.
Welch Hospital; Senior Services	N/A	Senior	Notes
No Concerns	N/A	89 year old black	Would attend again.
Welch Community Hospital	N/A	Senior	"Thank you for all of the information you gave us. It was very informative."
Hospital Closure; Money for Home Delivered Meals and Congregate Meals	N/A	Senior	Notes
Water; Medical Acces/ More Store Options	N/A	Senior	"Should have more information and more departments from the state to give as much information as possible."
Length of Life	N/A	68 year old black male Baptist	"Enjoyed the forum. It has been good."

Acknowledgements

Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission
Office of the Governor
West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services
West Virginia Department of Economic Development
West Virginia Department of Human Services
West Virginia Human Rights Commission
West Virginia Legislature
West Virginia Secretary of State's Office
West Virginia Small Business Administration
West Virginia Treasury
West Virginia Women's Commission