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A Division of the WV State Building Trades, AFL-CIO | Brad Winans, President | John Epperly, Secretary-Treasurer | Justin Williams, Director

Trades Win Workforce Dev. Award for STAND

On November 11, the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades were awarded the Workforce Development Award from the Construction User's Roundtable (CURT) for their work on the Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Nontraditional Degree Program (STAND).

The CURT Workforce Development Award is given annually to celebrate extraordinary or innovative training and educational programs in the construction industry.

The award recognizes individuals and organizations that have gone above and beyond to create programs that benefit the larger construction industry.

The STAND program allows West Virginia residents who have completed a Department of Labor (DOL) registered apprenticeship program (or West Virginia residents who are currently enrolled in a DOL apprenticeship program) to complete an Associate of Applied Science degree at a West Virginia public community and technical college by taking only the general education courses that are needed—all covered at no cost to the student apprentice.

"We are very proud of the work our members and partners have completed to make the STAND Program possible," said George Capel, Government Relations Director for

the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Council.

"I truly believe this program is going to help strengthen the pipeline of skilled leaders to the construction

industry."

During the 2025 West Virginia Legislative Session, new funds were made available to cover tuition costs

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(From left) Greg Sizemore, Executive Director of the Construction User's Roundtable (CURT); John Epperly, Secretary-Treasurer for the WV Building and Construction Trades; George Capel, Government Relations Director for the WV Building and Construction Trades; and Jim Ellis, Consultant and CURT Chairman of the Board present the 2025 CURT Workforce Development Award to the WV Building and Construction Trades for the creation and work on the Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Nontraditional Degree Program (STAND).

FirstEnergy Announces Plans for Natural Gas and Solar Power Generation Facilities

FirstEnergy has announced plans to pursue approval for the construction of a 1,200-megawatt combined-cycle natural gas plant.

FirstEnergy Board Chair, President, and Chief Executive Officer Brian Tierney said they plan to begin the permitting process with the

Public Service Commission early next year for a new power generation facility, and the goal is to be operational in 2031.

The new facility is part of the company's 10-year Integrated Resource Plan.

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Wheeling Nailers Hold Union Appreciation Night at Wesbanco Arena in Wheeling, WV

Earlier this month, the Wheeling Nailers hockey team held their annual Union Appreciation Night at Wesbanco Arena on the team's opening night of the 2024-2025 season.

The event was host to a sold-out crowd, with 1260 tickets being purchased for members of the trades.

At the beginning of the event, Eran Molz, President of the Upper Ohio Valley Building and Construction Trades Council and Eric Starkowicz, Executive Director of the Ohio Valley Construction Employers Council, performed the ceremonial puck drop to start the game.

Also, members of trades unions were on hand to present the flag of the United States of America before the game.

"We are so proud of our building trades," said Eran Molz, Business Manager for the Upper Ohio Valley Building and Construction Trades Council. "This night is for you and your families and for all the hard work and amazing skills you provide for our local contractors in the valley!"

The event was held to showcase

union support in the greater Wheeling area, which has a long history with the labor movement, and spread awareness of the benefits of a career in the skilled trades.

"The love our Union Brothers and Sisters have for each other was appar-

ent tonight. The stands looked like one big reunion. They were greeting each other as they went to their seats, introducing their families to their co-workers, giving high 5's after goals and cheering together during the fights," said Kyle Kull, Organizer

for the West Virginia Appalachian Laborers District Council.

"This event is a great way to give back to our members and strengthen the bonds that tie us together in the labor movement. I can't wait to do it again next year!" ■



UOV Building Trades President Eran Molz and OVCEC Executive Director Eric Starkowicz, perform the ceremonial puck drop at the annual Building Trades Night at the Nailer's Ice Rink in Wheeling, West Virginia.

Trades Win

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for associate degrees at WV community and technical colleges for members of the trades.

HB 2026, also known as the Budget Bill, included a \$1,033,650 budgetary appropriation to the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education, which covers associate degree tuition costs for individuals who are currently enrolled in or have completed a Department of Labor-registered apprenticeship program.

West Virginia resident DOL apprenticeship completers who enroll in the program have six years from the date of enrolling to complete their associate degree of applied sciences.

The list of colleges where the STAND funding can cover the tuition for trades members include: West Virginia University at Parkersburg, Mountwest CTC, West Virginia Northern CTC, New River CTC, Pierpont CTC, Blue Ridge CTC, Southern West Virginia CTC, Eastern West Virginia CTC, and BridgeValley CTC.

Capel says fully funding the STAND Program, in its second year, will be a major priority of the trades during the upcoming legislative session.

For more information about the STAND program log on to www.cfww.com/STAND and email georgecapel@actwv.org. ■

FirstEnergy

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"That includes a transformative proposal—a new 1,200-megawatt natural gas combined cycle power plant to be operational in 2013," Tierney said.

Tierney also said there are plans to work with the PSC to extend the life of the coal-fired Harrison Power Station near Shinnston and the Fort Martin Power Station near Morgantown for another decade.

The location for the new power generation facility is still being considered, but it will be a companion facility to two others already in operation. Additionally, the site will also include a 70-megawatt solar facility.

"The plant is designed to work in concert with our existing energy in-

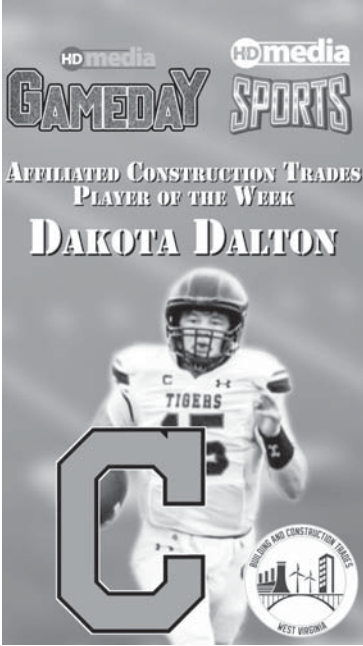
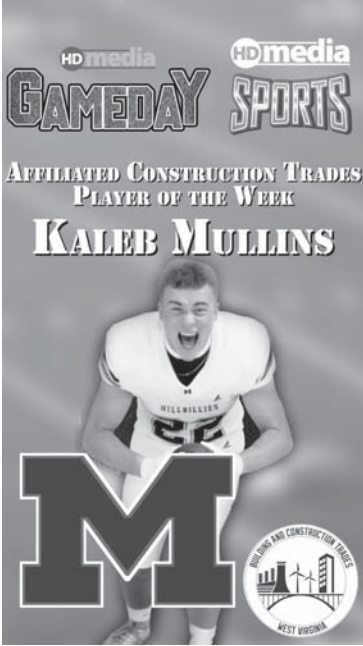
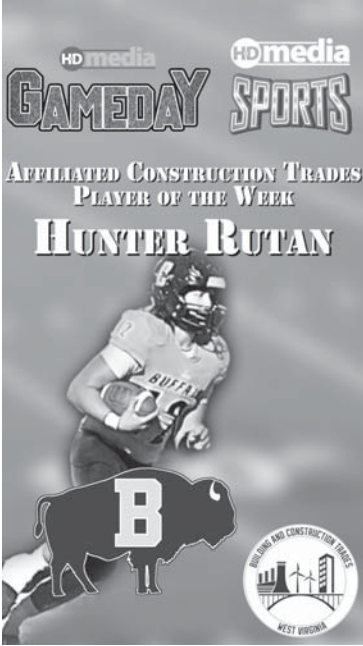
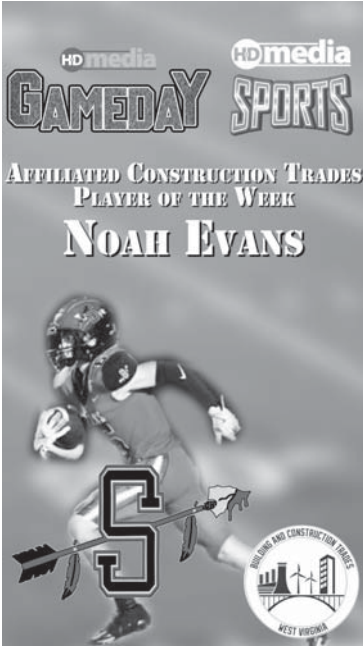
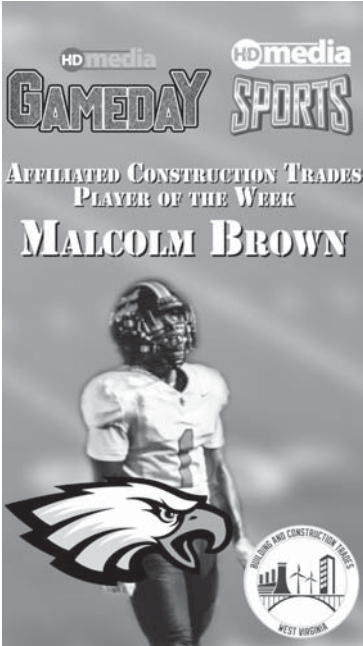
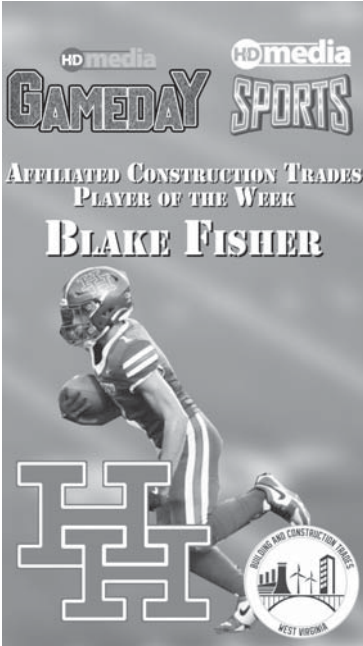
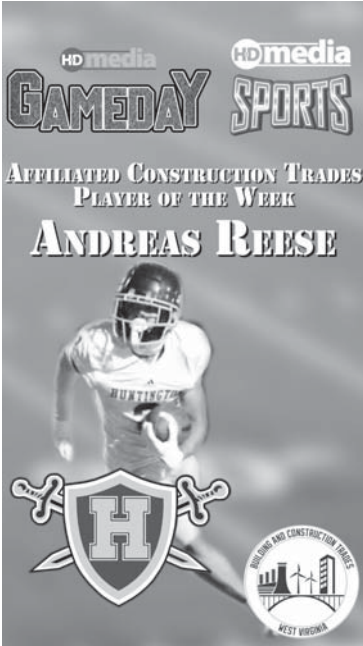
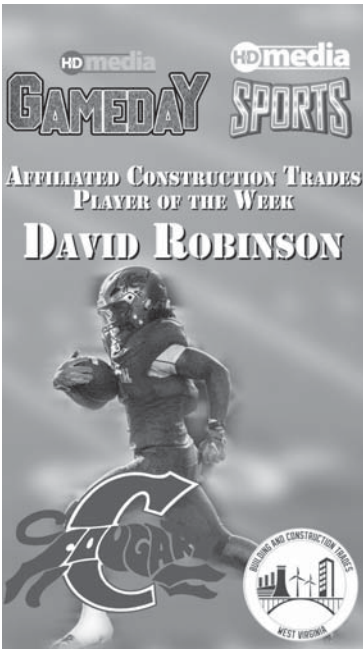
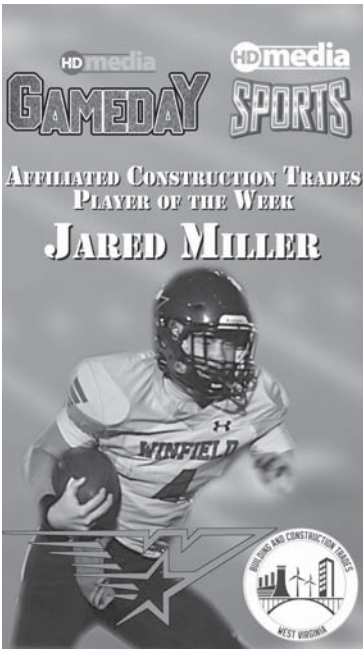
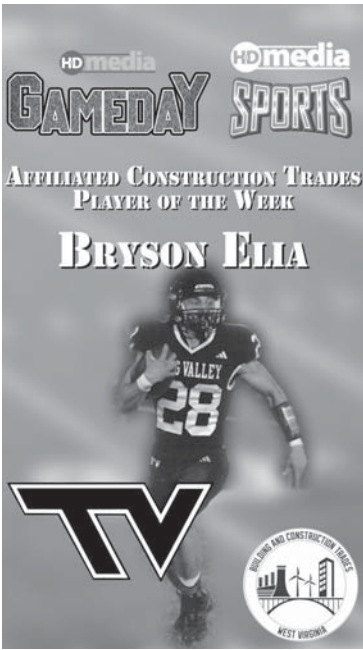
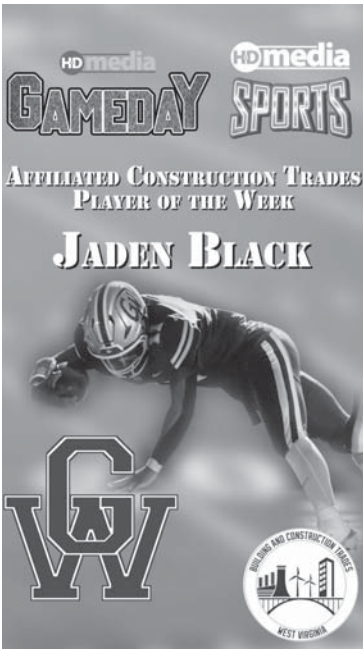
frastructure, including the Harrison and Fort Martin Power Stations, supporting a balanced and reliable energy mix that utilizes all of West Virginia's abundant energy resources," Tierney said.

The construction phase is expected to create more than 3,260 jobs and generate \$68 million in state and local tax revenue.

The site has not been determined, but the community will then receive the economic benefit of the plant for decades to come.

"Ongoing operations are expected to support nearly 2,200 direct and indirect jobs and \$86 million in state and local tax revenues annually," Tierney said. ■

2025 High School Players of the Week



The High School Player of the Week program is part of an ongoing recruitment initiative by the trades to educate young adults about the availability and benefits of construction craft apprenticeship programs.

The sponsorship is in partnership with HD Media, the owner and operator of the Charleston Gazette, the Huntington Register-Herald, and other news outlets throughout the state.

Guest Editorial by John Epperly, WV BCT Secretary-Treasurer

How West Virginia's Skilled Trades Strengthen Families and Communities

Each holiday season, West Virginians are reminded that the true measure of our state's strength is found in the ways we show up for one another.

For members of the West Virginia Building & Construction Trades (WVBCT), this commitment to community is woven into our very being. Our members don't just build the roads, bridges, schools, and energy infrastructure that keep West Virginia moving; they show up after hours, off the clock, and from the heart, especially during the holidays.

For example, this year, one of our partnerships supports the Salvation Army where we were able to bring holiday magic to more than 120 children and families throughout our

state.

From bicycles and warm coats to dolls, games, and essential household items, our members, affiliates, and partners stepped up to ensure no child wakes up without joy and no family goes without hope.

Because for us, service is not seasonal. It is foundational.

Our apprenticeship programs, funded through union-negotiated training contributions, do more than teach critical skills.

They lift young people into careers without student debt, providing stability and purpose.

During the holidays, the same hands that build our state also carry gifts, stock toy drives, ring bells, load

boxes, and lift up families who need it most.

This is what makes West Virginia's union trades different.

The work we do does not end at

Our economic impact proves that West Virginia's skilled trades drive growth.

Our community work proves that we also drive hope.



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WV AFL-CIO Holds 2025 Convention



Members of the West Virginia AFL-CIO Executive Board are sworn in for their new terms at the WV AFL-CIO Convention, held in Charleston West Virginia on November 4th and 5th.

The WV AFL-CIO Convention is held every four years and serves as the time when officers are elected to the new terms.

This year, AFL-CIO President Josh Sword and Secretary-Treasurer Andy Walters were reelected to four-year terms.

In addition, members of the AFL-CIO Executive Board were elected, with two new positions added to the Board via a By-Laws change which occurred this year.

In addition, several resolutions were passed including three offered by the WV Building and Construction Trades.

the job site.

Rather, it extends into neighborhoods, shelters, classrooms, food pantries, playgrounds, and family living rooms across the state.

As we celebrate this holiday season, we want to extend our deepest gratitude to the apprentices, journeymen, business managers, local leaders, collaborating partners, and the many volunteers who make this work possible. Your generosity reflects the best of West Virginia and reaffirms our belief that strong communities are built by people who care.

As we look toward a new year filled with major development projects, expanded workforce training, and unprecedented opportunities for skilled labor, one thing remains consistent: the heart of our work will always be people.

When our members invest in children and families, we are investing in West Virginia's future. From our families to yours, happy holidays, West Virginia.

We're proud to build with you, and we're honored to serve beside you. ■

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