

AUGUST 2026

THE CHARLES TOWN INITIATIVE

Monthly Newsletter



DEAR CHARLES TOWN,

What a month it's been. When we look back at July and August, one thing stands out: Jefferson and Berkeley County communities show up. You showed up to haul nearly six tons of waste from behind Walmart, to lace up skates and share a meal with local families, and to mentor the next generation of student leaders at Shepherd. None of it happens without you. Thank you for proving, again and again, that Charles Town is at its best when we work together. Here's to what's next.



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COLLABORATION WINS: REMOVING NEARLY 12,000 POUNDS IN THREE-DAY COMMUNITY CLEANUP

A dozen Eastern Panhandle organizations and 39 volunteers cleared a five-ton site in three days without displacing a single person.



Over three days this July, a coalition of a dozen Eastern Panhandle organizations came together for a Community Clean Up Project. The project removed 11,821 pounds of waste from the wooded area behind the Charles Town Walmart. The effort was driven by the Jefferson Berkeley Alliance on Substance Use Prevention, with The Jefferson County Health Department and its Quick Response Team (QRT) joining in crucial ways, such as monitoring conditions and identifying the site as a priority. Additionally, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) handled all of the hauling and disposal. Rounding out the work were 39 volunteers who lent their hands and muscle to make quick work of an enormous undertaking.

Monday alone accounted for 6,830 pounds, not including the propane tanks that were also cleared. By the end of the third day, the running total had climbed to well over five tons.

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"Once again, collaboration wins," organizers said in a note thanking the participating agencies. "So grateful for yet another example of the Eastern Panhandle not working in silos to get things done."

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11,821

POUNDS OF WASTE REMOVED

0

PEOPLE DISPLACED

3

DAYS OF WORK

12

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

39

VOLUNTEERS



Community Partners

Made possible by the combined efforts of the following organizations.

- East Ridge Health Systems
- Family Resource Center of the Panhandle
- Jefferson Berkeley Alliance on Substance Use Prevention
- Jefferson County Community Ministries
- Jefferson County Health Department
- Jobs & Hope WV
- Potomac Highlands Guild
- The Martinsburg Initiative
- The Recovery Village
- West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection
- WVU Medicine
- Jefferson County Quick Response Team

ROLLING INTO COMMUNITY

JBA's Skate Party Draws a Crowd



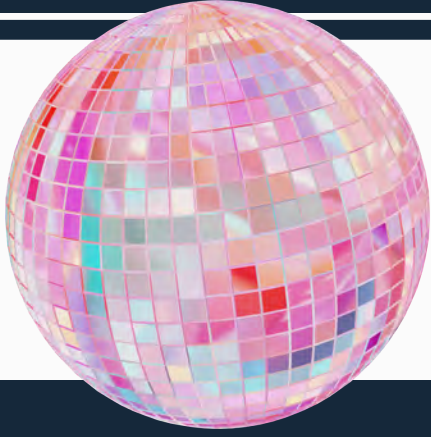
The lights were low, the music was up, and the wheels were rolling as JBA hosted its recent Skate Party at The Galaxy Skateland. The free evening was built entirely around giving local youth a safe, positive, and substance-free place to just be kids.

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We had an amazing turnout of 102 people, and the entire evening was filled with highlights," said Adrienne Borgman. "It was truly special to watch parents teaching their kids how to skate, families enjoying a free meal together, and teenagers just laughing and having pure, unstructured fun."

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That mix of families, first-time skaters, and independent teen groups gave the night its energy. And, for the JBA team, it captured exactly why events like this matter.

"My favorite part of the day was seeing our local teenagers smiling, laughing, and just getting to be kids," Borgman said. "This truly highlights why community initiatives like this are so vital. When we provide our youth with safe, positive, and substance-free environments, we empower them to make healthy choices and give them a vibrant place to thrive."

For Alex Gonzales, the highlight was watching a whole community come together in one room.

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"My favorite part was seeing everyone come together and enjoy themselves," Gonzales said. "It was great to see the kids having fun, interacting with each other, and just being able to enjoy a positive experience in a safe and supportive environment. The energy and excitement of the kids really stood out to me."

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Gonzales added that the value of the evening goes well beyond a night of skating. "These events are important because they give JBA an opportunity to build positive relationships with children, families, and the community," he said. "They create a safe space where kids can have fun, feel supported, and connect with positive adults and community resources."



Much of the night's success, organizers were quick to note, belonged to the venue's team.

"I cannot say enough good things about The Galaxy Skateland staff. They were unbelievably amazing!" Borgman said. "From passing out concessions and engaging the kids in games to smoothly managing announcements over the loudspeaker, their energy and helpfulness made the night a massive success."

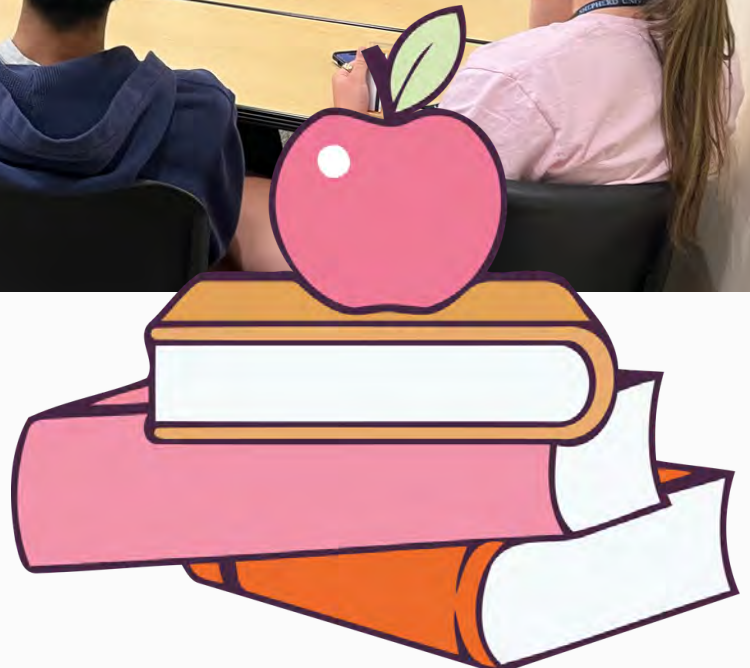


Looking ahead, JBA is already thinking about how to make future skate nights even stronger while keeping them just as welcoming. With 102 people, full plates, and a floor full of smiling kids, JBA's Skate Party was more than a fun night out — it was a reminder of what happens when a community shows up for its young people. Here's to the next one.



SHEPHERD UNIVERSITY RISING LEADERS PROGRAM

JBA Director Tom Kearns and The Martinsburg Initiative Director Margaret Kursey recently met with a group of students from the Shepherd University Rising Leaders program. The students shared that the conversation helped them shape their idea for preventing vape use among high schoolers. This event was a great example of JBA supporting the next generation of community leaders.





"TALK. THEY HEAR YOU."®
CAMPAIGN



What You Can Do to Prevent Your Child From Drinking Alcohol or Using Other Drugs

Be aware of potential risk factors, including:

- Significant life transitions, such as graduating from middle or high school or getting a driver's license;
- A history of social and emotional problems;
- Depression, anxiety disorders, or other mental health issues;
- A family history of alcohol or other substance use disorders; and
- Hanging out with friends or peers who drink alcohol or use other drugs.

Be a positive role model.



- Don't drink alcohol or use other drugs and drive, and don't get in a car if the driver has been drinking or using other drugs.
- Don't use prescription medication that wasn't prescribed by your doctor. And don't misuse medication that was prescribed to you.
- Get help if you think you have an alcohol- or other drug use-related problem.
- Don't give alcohol or other drugs to your child or their friends and peers. Explain that underage drinking and other drug use are never acceptable inside or outside your home.
- Know where you keep all of your alcohol and prescription medication, and always remind your child and their friends and peers that these substances are off-limits.

Work with schools and communities to ensure that they:

- Support and reward young people's decisions not to drink alcohol and use other drugs;
- Identify and intervene with kids who are engaged in alcohol and other drug use;
- Create, enforce, and promote rules that prevent underage drinking and other drug use; and
- Develop acceptable behavior agreements that are established, well-known, and applied consistently.

Provide support and give space for growth.

- Be involved in your child's life. Go to their school events and extracurricular activities, ask about their day, follow through on your commitments to them, and set aside time to do things together.
- Stay actively engaged in their social media activity. Talk with them about the differences between appropriate and inappropriate content and emphasize that what gets posted online can be there forever.
- Encourage their independence while establishing appropriate limits.
- Make it easy for them to share information about their life by actively listening and asking open-ended questions.
- Know where they are, what they're doing, and whom they're spending time with.

- Meet and get to know the parents or caregivers of their friends and peers. Share your rules about not allowing underage drinking or other drug use.
- Find ways for them to be involved in family life, such as participating in fun family activities and events, helping with house projects or weekly meal planning, doing chores, or volunteering together in the community.
- Tell them to never drink alcohol or use other drugs and drive or get in a car driven by someone who has been drinking or using other drugs.
- Help them find services and support if you're worried that they're using substances.
- Create and sign a family agreement form where you agree to help keep them substance-free and they agree to not drink alcohol or use other drugs.
- Learn more about the risks and dangers of underage drinking and other drug use by visiting talktheyhearyou.samhsa.gov and using #TalkTheyHearYou on social media. Share and discuss this information with them.



Set clear rules and expectations.

- Brainstorm with your child about ways they can have fun without drinking alcohol or using other drugs.
- Encourage them to avoid parties and other gatherings where alcohol or other drugs are present. And don't allow underage drinking or other drug use at get-togethers in your home.

Use Screen4Success.

Talking with kids early and often about the risks and dangers of underage drinking and other drug use can help keep them safe. But how do you know if your child needs more support, and where do you go to find it? Screen4Success will help you better understand your child's health, wellness, and wellbeing and find resources to help address their needs.

HELPFUL RESOURCES



Use and share Screen4Success.



Download and use "Talk. They Hear You." mobile app.



Subscribe and listen to "What Parents Are Saying" podcast.



Download and order "Talk. They Hear You." materials online from SAMHSA Store.



Download and read full "Tips for Teens" fact sheet series.



Download and read other SAMHSA underage drinking prevention and reduction materials.



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Substance Abuse and Mental Health
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