

Recreation area eyed for blighted 30-acre parcel in Hanover Twp.

Earth Conservancy received grant to reclaim the site

By Bob Kalinowski
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HANOVER TWP. — The nonprofit group Earth Conservancy plans to transform a blighted 30-acre parcel along the South Valley Parkway into a recreation area with walking trails and an inclusive playground thanks to a \$6.7 million grant.

Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection awarded the grant to Earth Conservancy to reclaim the site, which is situated between the Pennsylvania State Police barracks and the CVS Caremark facility.

The mine-scarred site, right off state Route 29, was once owned by the Glen Alden Coal Company and left abandoned. Following the 1972 flood caused by Tropical Storm Agnes, the site was used to dump debris as were other idle strip mining sites in the area.

"Earth Conservancy is incredibly grateful...This grant allows us to transform a former strip mine — once used for debris disposal from Agnes in 1972 — into a vibrant community park," said Terry Ostrowski, president and CEO of Earth Conservancy. "The site's accessibility and size make it ideal for a variety of outdoor activities. We genuinely believe it will not only provide a wonderful resource for residents, but also attract regional athletic tournaments, boosting our economy and fostering community engagement."

When the project was first touted in 2022, Earth Conservancy said they were considering four designs, which ranged from Plan A, which included an indoor sports complex and three sports fields, to Plan D, which featured mostly "passive" green space with walking trails. Estimated costs ranged from between \$27 million and \$41 million.

The land eyed for the park was long known as the "Hanover 7A" site, which was a total of 48 acres acquired in 1994 when Earth Conservancy purchased more than 16,500 acres of land from the

bankrupt Blue Coal Corporation. For years, the organization worked toward basic reclamation, including capping and grading, of the land that was marred with large open pits.

In 2019, a total of 18 acres of the parcel were sold to a local developer who built the new barracks for State police at Wilkes-Barre.

Earth Conservancy and stakeholders envisioned a park on the remaining land and applied for a grant through the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) Program. Recently, the organization was notified it was awarded a \$6.7 million grant.

Work at the site will include grading, subsurface stabilization, installation of basic utilities and parking areas, site revegetation and construction of initial park amenities, including grass fields, a walking trail, and an inclusive playground.

"This park will benefit the community and region — fostering health, unity, and vibrant connections that enrich lives. The township looks forward to supporting this very important project," Hanover Twp. Manager Sam Guesto said.

As of today, Earth Conservancy has reclaimed and repurposed more than 2,060 mine-scarred acres.

"This project represents a terrific combination of conservation and recreation," state Sen. Lisa Baker, R-20, of Lehman Twp., said. "We are fortunate to have a local group like the Earth Conservancy with the vision and energy to assemble and carry out a plan that contributes to the physical and mental health of area residents. This opens opportunities for those of all ages to enjoy the outdoors."

State Rep. Alec Ryncavage, R-119, of Hanover Twp., also saluted the project.

"This is a transformative investment for Hanover Township and the entire region," Ryncavage said. "Reclaiming abandoned mine land and turning it into a vibrant public space will not only improve our environment but also create new recreational opportunities for families and support ongoing economic development. I was proud to support this project and look forward to seeing it come to life."

Pittston Area school hosts economic success fair for area students

By Christopher Doyle
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The year's final Your Economic Success program, or YES! program, was held at Pittston Area's Martin L. Mattei Middle School on Friday. The organization Junior Achievement of Northeastern Pennsylvania hosted the event, which was meant to help students explore possible careers.

Susan Magnotta, the president of Junior Achievement of NEPA, said the investment of her organization in the youth would benefit the entire region.

"We believe young people, with the right mentoring and influences, can positively change our communities, and we are excited to have significantly expanded our YES! Programs this school year," Magnotta said in a news release issued in advance of the event.

The YES! program Friday featured 72 local community and corporate volunteers. They worked to teach the students, which included over 760 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, how to write resumes, prepare for interview. The volunteers also helped students learn more about jobs in science, technology, and engineering, and mathematics; as well as about jobs in manufacturing and the trades. The career advice was complemented by sessions giving personal and financial guidance.

Volunteers scheduled to be on site Friday included those from the Dempsey Uniform & Linen Supply



Students fill out career interest surveys during the 23rd 'Your Economic Success' Program at Martin L. Mattei Middle School in Pittston on Friday. JASON ARDAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Inc., NEPIRC and the State Police.

"Our goal is to help students graduate from high school on a pathway to economic mobility," Magnotta said. "Junior Achievement programs help students identify their passions and discover a wide variety of career opportunities they may have not known about previously."

According to its website, Junior Achievement provides millions of young people professional and financial guidance in order to "let them know it's possible to invest in their future, to gain a better understanding of how the world works, and to pursue their dreams." The NEPA Junior Achievement news release urges those interested in sponsoring or volunteering for its efforts to visit www.nepa.ja.org or call Magnotta at 570-602-3600.



Black Scranton Project founder Glynis Johns dances on roller skates at the Juneteenth Jubilee Block Party at the Black Scranton Center for Arts in Culture in Scranton on June 15, 2024. FILE PHOTOS

EXPANDING THE PARTY

Juneteenth celebration growing in Scranton, also planned in W-B

By Melissa Janoski
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The Black Scranton Project is expanding its Juneteenth celebrations from one day to three, with the addition of a punk and alternative music festival, a church service and brunch.

Juneteenth commemorates the end of slavery in the U.S. and marks the day that delayed news of emancipation reached a group of enslaved people in Texas. It is a federal holiday, closing many government buildings June 19 and beginning a long weekend of celebrations.

"This year, we'll be celebrating on Juneteenth, so that's going to be exciting," said Glynis M. Johns, founder and CEO of the Black Scranton Project. Juneteenth is her favorite holiday.

Events are free and open to the public.

The Black Scranton Project 6th Juneteenth Jubilee block party is June 19, from 2 to 8 p.m., at the 1902 N. Main Ave., Scranton center. It includes free roller skating in a temporary rink, food, a DJ, artists, giveaways, vendors, games and ice cream.

After area musicians reached out, a punk and alternative music festival was added June 20, from 2 to 6 p.m.

"It's our take on Afro-punk, kind of inviting local and also just kind of regional Black and brown performers to come and have a platform and a stage. I know it's always harder for alternative style artists to put themselves out there," Johns said.

The Black Scranton Project wants to support "all kinds of art," Johns said.

"One, because Black is not a monolith. And two, there are so many great artists and creatives in the region that are doing amazing things."



Scenes from the 2024 Juneteenth Jubilee Block Party at the Black Scranton Project. This year's Jubilee Block Party will be held June 19 from 2 to 8 p.m.

Several musicians will perform. Pucker Up! is one of the performers.

On June 22, the Black Scranton Project is collaborating with Bethel AME Church to mark Juneteenth at the church's 11 a.m. worship service. It will include several visiting choirs.

"We want it to be not only an event at Bethel, but also a community event," said the Rev. Mark Alexander, pastor of the 716 N. Washington Ave., Scranton, church.

Juneteenth celebrations are a chance to recognize Black contributions, Alexander said. "We've never gotten the recognition, and it's time we get the recognition for what we have done to make this country great."

Juneteenth is also a time to focus on "what God has brought us through," he said. "God has never left us, nor put us in a position where we did not have hope. So we should always have hope that

there will be a better day coming, and better times coming, even through tribulations that we may have. There is always something to have hope about," Alexander said.

Bethel AME is the oldest Black church in Scranton.

Back at the Black Scranton Project Center for Arts & Culture, the Sunday celebration will end with brunch at 1 p.m.

"It's going to be a fun, dynamic weekend," Johns said, "and we are excited to kind of try out new kinds of events, bring the community together," she said.

Information and contact details at blackscranton.org and social media.

In Wilkes-Barre, UNITY Collective is holding a Juneteenth block party June 19 on Public Square from 5 to 10 p.m. There will be music and dancing, food, interactive art, poetry, speakers, community organizations and vendors. Information is on social media.



Dallas Class of 2025 salutatorian Rachael Flanagan, left, and valedictorian Bruce Graham pose for a photo before the 64th commencement in Dallas Twp. on Friday, May 20, 2025. BILL TARUTIS / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Dallas School District honors Class of 2025

The Dallas School District held its 2025 commencement ceremony on May 30 at Mountaineer Stadium and 172 students earned degrees. Bruce Graham was the class valedictorian and Rachael Flanagan was the salutatorian. For more on the area's graduates, be sure to pick up a copy The Citizens' Voice's salute to the Class of 2025 on June 29.