

Artists seeked for Earth Conservancy contest

By Bill O'Boyle
boboyle@timesleader.com

ASHLEY — Earth Conservancy this week announced an art contest to design the cover of its upcoming native wildflower pollinator mix seed packets. Elizabeth Hughes, EdD, Earth Conservancy's Director of Communications, said the organization is looking for artwork that tells a story — one that celebrates our region's anthracite mining history, captures the ongoing transformation of the land and highlights the native plants and pollinators that are helping to bring it back to life.

For more than 30 years, Earth Conservancy has been leading efforts to restore and repurpose 16,500 acres of former coal company-owned land in the Wyoming Valley of Northeast Pennsylvania.

From reclaiming more than 2,000 acres, to restoring damaged streams, to preserving over 9,300 acres for trails, parks, wildlife habitat, and recreation, Hughes said Earth Conservancy's mission is to heal the land and create opportunities for the future for people to live, work, and play.

And Hughes said the seed packets are part of that mission.

"For years I'd been searching for a giveaway that wasn't plastic or disposable," Hughes said. "We needed something that actually connected to what we do here."

Hughes said she knew seed packets existed as promotional items, but they typically contained non-native seeds that didn't germinate well in Pennsylvania soil. After researching companies that specialized in regional native plant blends, she found Michigan-based Seed Needs.

"When I found Seed Needs, I thought this is exactly what we're looking for," Hughes said. "They connect directly to our work of renewal, and they give back to the community, too."

With help from John Levitsky, Watershed Specialist at the Luzerne Conservation District, Hughes selected a custom mix of wildflowers

including black-eyed Susan, butterfly milkweed, coreopsis, spiderwort, and purple cone-flower, among others. "People can plant these in their own yards and watch the same wildflowers grow that are coming back to our reclaimed sites," Hughes said.

About the contest
Earth Conservancy is calling on artists to help bring new life to old coal lands — through art. Your design could feature pollinators, wildflowers, reclaimed landscapes, or your creative interpretation of how the area's past connects to our future.

The nonprofit is hosting a contest to design the cover of its upcoming native wildflower seed packets, which will be distributed at conferences, community events, and outreach programs beginning in 2026.

Hughes said the winning design will be featured on the front of a limited-edition seed packet launching in 2026 — and your work will be shared through the EC website, social media, and newsletter, and at the many conferences and community events where these packets will be distributed.

Submission deadline is Friday, Nov. 21, 3 p.m.

The winning design will be featured on the front of a limited-edition seed packet filled with a custom blend of native wildflowers that support pollinators like bees and butterflies.

The winner will also receive a \$250 award. Second- and third-place winners will receive smaller cash prizes.

Guidelines, entry forms and artist waivers are available at www.earthconservancy.org.

For information, contact Dr. Elizabeth W. Hughes by email e.hughes@earthconservancy.org or call 570-823-3445.

Call to artists

Hughes, who grew up in the area, studied Fine Arts at Keystone College, and later worked at the Everhart Museum, initially considered creating the artwork herself.

However, she thought about the many talented artists she had gotten to know over the years.

See CONTEST | 6A

PENNSYLVANIA ROUNDUP



Submitted Photo

This Sunday on NBC's Meet The Press with Kristen Welker, Gov. Josh Shapiro spoke about the tragic loss of three police officers in York County, the need to speak and act with moral clarity in response to all forms of political violence, and the Trump Administration's dangerous attacks on Americans' fundamental freedoms — including the freedom of speech.

Shapiro condemns all forms of political violence

By Bill O'Boyle
boboyle@timesleader.com

This Sunday on NBC's Meet The Press with Kristen Welker, Gov. Josh Shapiro spoke about the tragic loss of three police officers in York County, the need to speak and act with moral clarity in response to all forms of political violence and the Trump Administration's dangerous attacks on Americans' fundamental freedoms — including the freedom of speech.

Last week, the governor also delivered a keynote address at the 2025 Eradicate Hate Global Summit in Pittsburgh, where he stressed that censorship and vengeance are not solutions — and that in this moment, leaders must focus on healing, protecting free speech and bringing people together.

Below are key excerpts from Shapiro's Meet The Press interview.

On this moment in America

"I think we're at an inflection point as a nation, and I think we can go in a number of different ways. I hope we go the direction of healing, of bringing people together, of trying to find our commonalities, not just focus on our differences.

"You referenced the firebombing and the attempted murder on my life and our family in April, at the Governor's Residence in Harrisburg. We could have very easily, at that moment, as a Commonwealth, slipped into a dark place. Instead, what I saw was a whole lot of light, a whole lot of people from all different walks of life, all different faiths, all different backgrounds, all different parties coming together to not just support me and my family, but to support our Com-

monwealth.

"We've got to find our better angels. We've got to universally condemn political violence, no matter where it is — whether it's against Charlie Kirk or someone else — it is not okay, and we all have to work together to condemn it. We got to find our better angels, the way we did here in Pennsylvania."

On the Trump Administration

"I think we're at a really dangerous moment here, and censorship, and what we're seeing from the federal government only serves to further divide us and make us less safe and erode our fundamental freedoms here in this country, and for a Republican Party led by Donald Trump — who loved for decades to cloak themselves in this blanket of patriotism and freedom. Heck, Donald Trump was talking about free speech in his inaugural address. What was that? Seven or eight months ago. And now, to see how quickly they are eroding on the foundational guideposts of our nation? Should scare everyone — whether you agree with the president or not, whether you voted for him or not — we are all less safe and less free because of the actions of this administration.

"In a society where we have less freedom — which is what the President is doing, restricting one's ability to speak, which is enshrined in the First Amendment, the First Amendment of our Constitution — we are all less safe. We are all less free. And if you attack someone today because of a particular political viewpoint. What's to say you're not going to attack someone tomorrow, silence someone tomorrow because of what they look like, how they pray, who they love? It's a really dangerous and slippery slope."

row because of what they look like, how they pray, who they love? It's a really dangerous and slippery slope."

On social media

"Gov. Cox (Utah) raised a really, really important point about social media. I don't think it is alone to blame, but I think it is a really important issue that we need to grapple with. We're trying to do so, here in Pennsylvania. We're trying to make sure that when young people, especially, are online, they can discern fact from fiction.

"My wife Lori has led an effort with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to have a toolkit available for teachers, students, and parents to be able to be really discerning when they're online, to decide what's real and what's fake. I want to be clear, we don't want to teach young people to have a left wing viewpoint or a right wing viewpoint, but we do want them to be able to look online and say, 'I gotta question that. I gotta figure out whether that's real or not.'"

"We have too many people now who can too easily find very dark corners of the Internet, where you have people there who are preying on their frustration — by the way, oftentimes very real frustration — and taking advantage of them and using their frustration, their worry, their angst to promote violence against others and to promote things that are going to create dangers in our communities. So, I think Gov. Cox was right to sound an alarm about it. We're doing some of that work here in Pennsylvania. Other states are doing it as well, and I think we've got to continue to work at it. And I think we need

a national conversation on this issue. And I hope Gov. Cox will be a part of that."

On Trump's record

"I think that there is no question to the quote that you read me there that Donald Trump is shattering the norms of our democracy, is blowing up institutions that protect all Americans, and he's making us less safe.

"He is also making lives way more difficult here in America. I hear it from farmers. I hear it from folks here in suburban Philadelphia. I hear it from folks in our cities. He's making things cost more. He's making us less safe. He's restricting our fundamental freedoms."

Fetterman, Houlihan back fight against Trump cuts

U.S. Sen. John Fetterman, D-Bradnock, and U.S. Rep. Chrissy Houlihan, D-Chester County, this week filed an amicus brief in support of a multi-state lawsuit against the Trump administration.

The lawsuit challenges the administration's decision to cut billions of dollars in funding for key U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs. The lawsuit — New Jersey et al. v. Vought et al. — argues that the administration misused a federal rule — 2 C.F.R. § 200.340(a)(4) — to cancel programs it claims "no longer match the agency's priorities."

See SHAPIRO | 6A



Fetterman



Houlihan

Man sentenced for animal cruelty

Staff Reports

WILKES-BARRE — A Duryea man pled guilty to a misdemeanor animal

cruelty offense after he was accused of killing a dog at his former West Pittston home in 2023. William Shelley IV.,

27, of Stevenson Street, was charged by Wyoming Area Regional Police with killing a dog behind his former house on

Elm Street on Feb. 11, 2023, according to court records.

Shelley told police he killed the dog "because the dog was talking to him," court records say.

Police discovered the deceased dog in the backyard when they responded to Shelley's house for a report of a man having a mental health crisis.

Prosecutors withdrew a felony charge of aggravated cruelty to animals against Shelley.

Lupas sentenced Shelley to one-year probation and was ordered not to own or care for any pets or animals.

Always the lowest price!

falconoilpa.com 570.383.3257 or 570.654.3441

DON'T BE CAUGHT IN THE WILD

START THE HEATING OIL SEASON OFF RIGHT!

\$10.00 OFF COUPON

ON YOUR NEXT ORDER OF 125 GALLONS OR MORE

*** NOT TO BE COMBINED WITH ANY OTHER OFFER EXPIRES 12/31/25***

NEW CUSTOMERS - GET \$20.00 OFF EACH OF YOUR NEXT 3 ORDERS!

"WE WILL BEAT ANY PRICE OUT THERE!"

Northeast Window, Inc.

WINDOWS, SIDING AND ROOFING

NEPA'S Quality Remodeling Contractor Since 1987

Over 8,000 Customers In NEPA

- Owens Corning Preferred Contractor
- Certainteed Five Star Contractor
- OKNA Windows Premier Dealer
- Licensed & Insured

Free Estimates • No Cost or Obligations

Wind • Hail • Storm • Insurance Claims Accepted

570-654-4220

PA #018418

Financing options available. 10 windows for \$92.00 a month

Restrictions Apply



The roundabout on state Route 315 near the airport.

Times Leader File Photo

PennDOT touts safety with roundabouts

By Bill O’Boyle
boboyle@timesleader.com

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) on Monday announced that roundabouts continue to provide safe, efficient travel across the Commonwealth.

Since 2005, PennDOT said 104 roundabouts have been built to improve traffic flow and/or decrease crash severity, and more than 30 additional roundabouts are in various stages of design and construction across Pennsylvania.

“For us, it’s simple — roundabouts remove

cross-traffic turns and eliminate T-bone crashes, while improving traffic flow” said PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll. “Any design that dramatically reduces the most serious crashes we see on the road is worthy of consideration in our projects.”

PennDOT finalized a data review through 2024 using 20 years of crash data from roundabouts around the state. Study findings showed that crashes with injuries were

reduced by 51% and total crashes decreased by 7%.

Pennsylvania data reflects national studies that found changing two-way sign-controlled intersections to a single-lane roundabout reduced injury crashes by more than 80%. Likewise, changing a signalized intersection to single-lane or multi-lane roundabout reduced crashes with injuries by up to 78%.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) lists roundabouts as a “Proven Safety Countermeasure” that improves safety by reducing vehicle speeds by angling incoming traffic.

The crashes that do occur tend to be side-swipe crashes with vehicles traveling at slower speeds rather than T-bone or head-on collisions.

Additionally, eliminating left turns across opposing traffic results in dramatically fewer injuries.

In addition to safety improvement, roundabouts carry, on average, approximately 30% more vehicles during peak traffic than similar intersections. In off-peak hours, roundabouts cause almost no delay, compared to traffic signals.

As roundabouts are

constructed around the state, PennDOT said it is important to know how to correctly navigate them.

More on roundabouts in Pennsylvania, including videos on navigating the intersections, how to use a truck apron and notable projects in the state can be found on the PennDOT Roundabouts web page.

Information about state infrastructure in Pennsylvania, including completed work and significant projects, is available online.

Find PennDOT’s planned and active construction projects at

When navigating a roundabout:

- Slow down and be prepared to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk.
- Circulating traffic has the right of way. Look left and check for approaching traffic. If there are multiple circulating lanes, yield to both before entering. Do not assume the vehicle in the inside lane will stay there.
- Do not stop while in the circulatory roadway, and always use your right turn signal to indicate your exit.

www.pa.gov/DOTprojects

Shapiro

From page 4A

Fetterman and Houlihan’s filing says this move is unconstitutional — by leaning on a little-known regulation, the administration is trying to overrule laws passed by Congress — hurting farmers, food banks, and rural communities in Pennsylvania and across

the country.

They said the Constitution makes clear that only Congress has the power to pass laws and decide how federal money is spent.

“Farmers in Pennsylvania and across the country plan their seasons and run their businesses around these programs. Pulling the rug out from under them isn’t just wrong, it’s destructive,” Fetterman said. “It tells

every farmer, food bank, and rural community that the federal government can’t be trusted as a reliable partner. I won’t stand for that.”

“These programs are a vital lifeline both for farmers and for hungry families. The Trump Administration’s reckless decision to walk away from the commitments it made through these programs is simply cruel,” Houlihan said.

Shapiro releases new vaccine recommendations

Following last week’s confusing and chaotic meeting of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), the Shapiro Administration released new recommendations to provide clear, evidence-based guidance to ensure vaccines remain accessible for Pennsylvanians who want them.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) issued new guidance expanding the list of organizations Pennsylvanians and their doctors should consult for vaccine recommendations to include the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG).

“Vaccines save lives, protect families, and prevent dangerous diseases from spreading throughout our communities,” Shapiro said. “While the federal government sows confusion, here in Pennsylvania, we are providing clear, evidence-based guidance to ensure Pennsylvanians and their doctors have trusted sources of information. Health care decisions should be up to you and your doctor.”

Contest

From page 4A

“I realized that a contest would do more than just design a packet cover,” she said. “It was a way to get more people to understand what Earth Conservancy is doing and to highlight how our industrial heritage and the land’s renewal are connected.”

All 2-D media are allowed. Professional artists, hobbyists and students are encouraged to submit entries.

Hughes noted she will also be reaching out to local art collectives and schools to help spread the word.

The first round of judging will be by Earth Conservancy staff, with the final selection made by Earth Conservancy’s Board of Directors.

“We’re looking for artwork that tells a story,” Hughes explained. “We want to see how artists connect the dots between our mining history and what’s growing here now — the butterflies, the wildflowers, the life coming back. I’m excited to see how artists interpret that.”

Statements

“I grew up here knowing about our anthracite history, but working at Earth Conservancy has shown me how deeply it scarred the land, and how much

effort it takes to repair it,” Hughes said. “To stand on a reclaimed site or next to a restored stream — seeing plant and animal life returning to it, it’s incredible to witness. Through this project, I want others to be part of the progress we’re making.”

“In my work, I like to highlight how the land, local industry, and community are all connected. I think this contest is a perfect example of that. Artists have a unique way of telling a story, and I’m excited to see how they envision what old coal lands can become.”

Terry Ostrowski, PE, President/CEO at Earth Conservancy, said the use of native plants is impor-

tant to EC’s reclamation work — especially on projects that focus on streams and habitat restoration.

“Too often, little consideration is given to plant selection when stabilizing a site, and that can mean poor growth from non-native species that can’t adapt to local soil and climate conditions,” Ostrowski said. “That can lead to erosion and sedimentation problems, or worse, the spread of invasive species that can take over a site and crowd out natives. Native plants also support local biodiversity. For example, not long after the Espy Run restoration was completed, we saw species, like monarch butterflies, return to

an area that had once been nothing but barren land covered with coal refuse.”

About Earth Conservancy

Earth Conservancy is a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the impacts of pre-regulatory anthracite coal mining in northeastern Pennsylvania.

In 1994, Earth Conservancy purchased nearly 16,500 acres of land from the bankrupt Blue Coal Corporation, much of which had been ignored, seen only as permanent eyesores and reminders of the past.

Earth Conservancy saw them differently: as an opportunity for transformation and growth. Since

then, we’ve reclaimed more than 2,000 acres, restored damaged streams, and preserved over 9,300 acres for trails, parks, wildlife habitat, and recreation.

Alongside these efforts, Earth Conservancy has developed comprehensive land-use plans, built acid mine drainage treatment systems, run a large-scale composting facility, and led environmental education initiatives that connect people with the land and its history. These projects trace back to Earth Conservancy’s overarching plan, seeking a more livable community now, while clearing the way for positive, progressive change for future generations.

RAINBOW JEWELERS
KINGSTON, PA 570-287-6257

WE BUY
GOLD, SILVER, COINS, ROLEX

WE BUY ALL GOLD

WE BUY ALL TYPES OF GOLD - ANY KARAT, ANY COLOR, ANY CONDITION, OLD, BROKEN, OR UNWANTED!

- RINGS
- BRACELETS
- NECKLACES
- EARRINGS
- CHARMS
- DENTAL

GOLD/SILVER COINS + BARS

- AMERICAN EAGLES
- KRUGERRANDS
- MAPLE LEAFS
- PANDAS
- BUFFALOS
- PERTH MINT
- HERAEUS
- PAMP SUISSE
- CREDIT SUISSE
- VALCambi SUISSE

SILVER

JEWELRY, WATCHES, FLATWARE, HOLLOWARE

- ACCESSORIES
- ANTIQUE
- PLATES
- MEDALS

WATCHES

BUYING ROLEX AND GOLD WATCHES

- GMT MASTER II
- SUBMARINER
- DATEJUST
- DAY-DATE