

## State Fire Marshal's Office to Celebrate 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*Contributed by Carol Nolte of the State Fire Marshal's Office.*

Since being appointed West Virginia's 16<sup>th</sup> State Fire Marshal in May 2000, Sterling Lewis, Jr. has been part of many significant events. He has been involved in a number of capacities including Incident Commander on explosions, hazardous materials spills, building fires, and even swift-water rescues. But the latest event is truly a first and only, according to Lewis. "So many times I've been the bearer of bad news

related to the work in which our office is involved. That's why I'm so pleased to announce that the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) is celebrating 100 years of service to the citizens of West Virginia."

The State Fire Marshal's Office has always been a small agency with a vast range of duties under the State Code, including fire investigation; public fire education; fire code inspections; plans review; licensing of

blasters, pyrotechnicians, electricians, and home inspectors; and



much more. Fire marshals are often seen on the evening news responding to fire fatalities, large loss fires, and explosions, or providing interviews on fire prevention and safety.

**Most people are unaware that along with celebrating its 100th anniversary, the State Fire Marshal's Office is one of the oldest State agencies.**

House Bill 160 passed on February 23, 1909 and became effective on May 24, 1909, creating the "Fire Marshal Law." The Fire Marshal's Department was formed on July 15, 1909, and was originally under the control of the State Auditor. Its mission at that time was two-fold: to implement an education campaign along with building inspections, with the aim of avoiding "fire waste" (fire loss) in the State; and to investigate arson fires and prosecute those guilty of setting fires.

The first State Fire Marshal was Charles A. Ellison. He was paid an annual salary of \$2,000 and was appointed by the State Auditor. Common expenses at that time included

## Vandalia Tradition Continues May 22-24

*Edited from information by Terri Marion of the Division of Culture and History.*

On Memorial Day weekend, May 22-24, the Cultural Center and State Capitol grounds will be the site of the 33rd Vandalia Gathering – the State's annual celebration of the traditional arts, music, dance, stories, crafts, and food of West Virginia. The free festival's unique blend of ethnic and cultural heritage combines an atmosphere as comfortable as a family reunion with the excitement of a state fair.

The Vandalia Gathering creates new memories each year for the thousands of visitors and pays tribute to West Virginia's mountain culture and ethnic heritage by showcasing a variety of craftspeople and performers.

For those who love the sounds of traditional music or would like to be introduced to it, the Vandalia Gathering fits the bill. Concerts and contests fill the weekend, and impromptu musical jam sessions spring up all over the grounds. At any moment, a shade tree becomes the site of a lively performance as strolling musicians stop to join in on a favorite tune. A special jam tent will be set up on the grounds that will be manned with musicians playing on Saturday from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M.



*The cool shade of a magnolia tree provides the perfect spot for some fine Appalachian music.*

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## West Virginia Selected to Partner with Pew Center on the States

*As one of only three states, West Virginia has the distinction of being selected to participate in a year-long program aimed at strengthening state operations and saving tax dollars.*

Along with Georgia and Ohio, West Virginia will partner with the Pew Center on the States in a program that will accelerate state improvements in targeted areas. Each state will have a project with a specific focus that will be included as part of Pew's "Management Lab." The goal is to improve results in the focus area and to eventually share those results with other states to encourage improvements nationwide. Each state will receive \$50,000 to assist with its project and intensive management support from Pew's experts and advisors.

West Virginia's project will center on establishing new statewide planning and budgeting systems that will ensure the State can provide the best return on its public investments.

In announcing West Virginia's selection, Governor Joe Manchin commented, "We know we can and must do better to improve our planning and budgeting process. We are



pleased to have this opportunity to save taxpayer dollars while delivering better service to our hard-working West Virginians."

Department of Administration Cabinet Secretary Robert W. Ferguson, Jr. is chairing the West Virginia project. "Given this valuable resource from the Pew Center on the States, West Virginia is anticipating great ideas to develop as our own representation from our key experts in the financial arena work hand-in-hand for positive outcomes," stated Ferguson.

All 50 states were eligible to apply for the program. Manchin and Ferguson are honored that West Virginia was chosen, since selection was based on each state's ability to create a senior-level team with the ability to implement improvement strategies that will produce positive results. According to Susan Urahn, Managing Director of the Pew Center on the States, the current economic downturn requires decisions that are results- and benefits-based. "State governments that improve performance and increase efficiencies will be in the strongest position to weather the challenges of this economy," she said.

Georgia will be working on a system to analyze spending data for all state agencies, colleges, and universities that could save millions; Ohio will create new human resources guidelines for all state departments to ensure that personnel are most effectively deployed across the state.

### WHEN THE EMERGENCY ALARM RINGS ...



Last month, we reminded you it's required that you leave the building when the emergency alarm sounds. That prompted an excellent question: What exactly should you do, and what should you take with you?

When a building evacuation happens, act as though you are leaving for the day.

- Gather your things as if you were leaving for the day, including your purse, coat, keys, and umbrella. Use common sense. Items like lunch boxes or totes that have your extra pair of shoes should be left behind.
- Shut down all computers and other equipment as is feasible, depending on the situation. Turn off all lights, and don't forget the office coffee pot!
- Close all office doors, but **DO NOT LOCK THEM**. Closing the doors forms protective barriers, but they must be unlocked to allow access for emergency personnel if needed.
- Employees who do not need assistance during evacuations should exit the building as quickly as possible, according to established protocol, and proceed to their assigned gathering places. Special needs employees and their buddies should gather at their designated locations and wait for instructions/assistance as appropriate.

### WIC Eligibility Eased

The Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) has announced expanded eligibility guidelines for its Women, Infants and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition program.

WIC is a short-term program that provides free nutritional food to eligible participants. The program offers nutrition education courses and monitors the progress of clients to help address problem areas early-on.

The eligibility expansion will allow more pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women to participate in the program, as well as increase the number of eligible children ages birth to age five.

Under the new guidelines, a family of two can make as much as \$26,955 a year and still qualify. For larger families, add \$6,919 for each member.

For specifics or more information, contact your local WIC Office or visit them online at <http://ons.wvdhhr.org>.

## Presenting the Amazing Emmiline and Alexander!

Allow us to introduce you to two prominent and extremely popular figures at the Capitol Complex: Emmiline and Alexander.

Emmiline and Alexander have a stellar reputation for entertaining visitors by pulling carts, jumping through hoops, and leaping in the air as high as 10 feet – all while being quite dapperly dressed. You’ll find Alexander in a smart suit with black pants, while his companion, Emmiline, appears in a dress featuring a white, chiffon-like skirt.

Who are these “people,” you ask? The April Fool’s joke is on you! Emmiline and Alexander aren’t people at all. *They’re actually fleas!*

The duo was the star attraction in a flea circus at Hubert’s Museum in New York City during the latter 1800’s. They eventually died, and in 1906, were donated to the State, where they were displayed at the old State museum in downtown Charleston. They were moved to the basement in the State Capitol at some point, and later came to the custody of then-Secretary of State A. James Manchin, the current Governor’s late uncle. Secretary

Manchin kept Emmiline and Alexander available for public viewing during his tenure as Secretary of State and State Treasurer. In 1993, they were invited to appear again in the State Museum, this time at the Cultural Center, where they remained on display until the museum closed for renovation in 2004.

Now, after a five-year hiatus in dark storage, the fleas, in their attire, are being readied to return to display at the museum.

Emmiline and Alexander are a type of flea that prefers a human host. They measure 3/16 of an inch, which is larger than typical cat/dog fleas. According to Culture and History Commissioner Randall Reid-Smith, the pair are among the State Museum’s most famous artifacts. “Generations of West Virginians have seen them and talked about them. When I came back here to work, the flea exhibit was one of the first things I asked about,” he said.

Emmiline and Alexander now have a new exhibit box which has been placed into the side of a brightly painted circus wagon. Charles Morris, Culture and History’s Exhibitions and Collections Manager, tells us that the new display will make them easier to see. “They are magnified twice, and lit from the side,” said Morris. He continued, “They’re wearing the same outfits they have been wearing since 1906.”

### GATHERING – Continued from Page 1

and on Sunday from noon to 5 P.M. In addition, the jam tent will present a Gospel Sing with Ginny Hawker of Coxs Mills on Sunday from 11 A.M. to noon. The public is invited to join in and participate.

During the festival, visitors can shop for a variety of craft items in the Craft Circle. Popular and specialty food products also will be available, and food booths will feature a unique sampling of traditional and ethnic foods, including such favorites as hot dogs, roasted corn, hamburgers, hot bologna sandwiches, funnel cakes, rib sandwiches, strawberry shortcake, cobblers, Greek and Italian specialties, and German sausages.

The 2009 Vandalia Gathering gets under way at 7 P.M. on Friday, May 22, in the Norman L. Fagan West Virginia State Theater at the Cultural Center with the Vandalia Sampler Concert featuring some of the festival’s favorite performers. Activities on Saturday and Sunday include old-time fiddle, banjo, and lap dulcimer competitions; a gospel workshop; and the much-anticipated Liars Contest (honest!). A second contest stage will hold competitions in flat pick guitar, mandolin, and bluegrass banjo. Traditional dance offerings range from demonstrations of ethnic and square dancing in the Great Hall of the Cultural Center to an outdoor flat foot dancing stage where spectators are encouraged to jump in and kick up their heels. The Old-Time for Young-Uns area will be open on Saturday from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M. and Sunday from noon to 5 P.M., featuring old-fashioned hands-on fun and games for all ages. In addition, the West Virginia Storytellers Guild will be on hand Saturday, while Sunday will feature kids’ concerts. The festival wraps up Sunday with a gospel concert in the theater at 6:30 P.M.

This year’s festival will feature a “Fruit Cobbler” contest on Saturday at 1 P.M., followed by a “Fruit Cobbler Walk” at 4 P.M. Registration for the contest is from 10 A.M. to 12:30 P.M.

Vandalia Gathering is a program of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. Visit the Division’s website at [www.wvculture.org](http://www.wvculture.org) for more information or a complete schedule of Vandalia Gathering events or call 304-558-0220.

**NOTE: Vandalia Gathering contests are open to West Virginia residents only.**

### DOP REACHES OUT

To improve its accessibility, the Division of Personnel (DOP) will be holding outreach sessions for State agency employees. Sessions will be held in Beckley (May 29), Belington (June 29), and Martinsburg (July 31).

More information is available on the DOP website at [www.state.wv.us/admin/personnel/emprel/toolbox/outreach.htm](http://www.state.wv.us/admin/personnel/emprel/toolbox/outreach.htm), or by calling Teresa Martin at 304-558-3950, ext. 57291.

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railroad fare, livery bills, telegraph costs, and expenses of witnesses for trials. Total expenditures that first year were exactly \$13,273.02.

In 1948, the State Fire Marshal's Office was transferred under the direction of the State Insurance Commissioner. At that time, the State Fire Marshal was C.A. Raper, and his staff consisted of seven assistant State fire marshals, one industrial fire protection engineer, a secretary and a janitor. In following years under the Insurance Commission, additional fire marshals, including a deputy fire marshal and plans reviewers, were added.

In 1976, the State Fire Commission was created by Act of the Legislature during the regular session. The Office of the Fire Marshal was transferred from the Insurance Commission to the State Fire Commission. WV Code § 29-3 charged the State Fire Commission with responsibility for promulgation of comprehensive regulations for the safeguarding of life and property from the hazards of fire and explosion – now known as the State Fire Code.

By 1983, the office had an Arson Division, an Inspection Division, a Project & Review Division, and a Fire Prevention & Control Division. By 2000, the SFMO consisted of a Fire Investigation Division, Fire Safety Inspection/Plans Review Division, Public Education Division and the Regulatory & Licensing Division. A few years later, the West Virginia Regional Response Program (formed as a result of the events of September 11, 2001 under the [then] Office of Emergency Services) was placed under the operational control of the SFMO. The teams respond to all types of hazards including natural disasters. Approximately 522 members from the fire service, emergency medical services and law enforcement provide emergency response capability across six defined regions of the State in the disciplines of Hazardous Materials/WMD, Urban Search/Technical Rescue and Mass Casualty/EMS, operating 19 fleet apparatuses.

Today, the State Fire Marshal's Office continues to provide ever-expanding services to the State of West Virginia with only 43 personnel: 32 fire marshals and 11 support staff.

"The original Fire Marshal's Office began with one State Fire Marshal, one Deputy Fire Marshal, two Assistant State Fire Marshals, and whatever clerical support the Auditor's Office provided at the time," said Lewis. "Since 1909, we've added only 28 sworn personnel and 11 office support – and yet our services to the citizens of this State have increased exponentially over the years. I'm very proud of the commitment of our people to keeping the public safe from fire, and that's why this 100th anniversary is such a milestone in our agency's history." He added, "I hope the next 100 years are equally productive."

### ON THE SUBJECT OF THE SWINE FLU

Current worldwide concerns regarding an outbreak of Swine Flu are making people nervous. To be "aware" is a good thing, but there is no need to panic. The best defense is a good offense. You can decrease your chances of contracting/spreading the illness by following the same rules you would for any other flu or sickness:

- ▲ Wash your hands often; when you can't wash, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. **NOTE: Washing is best!**
- ▲ Use tissues when you cough or sneeze, and dispose of them properly.
- ▲ Avoid public places as much as possible, and stay home if you're sick.
- ▲ Watch for symptoms (fever, lethargy, coughing, sore throat, etc.) and seek medical attention.



For current info: [www.wvdep.org/Home/HotTopicSwineInfluenza/tabid/1856/default.aspx](http://www.wvdep.org/Home/HotTopicSwineInfluenza/tabid/1856/default.aspx)

## Pencil In ...



### A Golden Horseshoe Winners' Reunion

at the State Capitol is planned for Friday, June 19, 2009. If you are or know of a Golden Horseshoe winner, visit the official website for additional information ([www.wv.gov/ghreunion](http://www.wv.gov/ghreunion)). You may also contact Molly George, Special Projects Coordinator Dept. of Education and the Arts Office of the Secretary (304-558-2440 or [molly.e.george@wv.gov](mailto:molly.e.george@wv.gov)).



Anyone interested in upcoming events for the Department of Environmental Protection can find the information on the agency's website at [www.wvdep.org/webapp/\\_dep/search/pio/pubinfocalendar.cfm](http://www.wvdep.org/webapp/_dep/search/pio/pubinfocalendar.cfm). The site lists events, locations, and contact information.



If you are a minority who is concerned about health issues specific to you, visit **WVDHHR's Office of Minority Health** at [www.wvomh.org](http://www.wvomh.org).



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