Mayor Williams delivers State of the City Address: Talks past deficits, successes and hopefulness for the future

By TOM JENKINS
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Mayor Williams revealed a “ Tale of Two Cities,” has become synony-
mous with the passage that begins with “it was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” It was this sentiment that Huntington Mayor Steve Williams made apparent during Thursday’s State of the City Address. Williams made it clear that Huntington’s past year can be best described by Dickens’ famous words. In the past year Huntington faced a large budget deficit and cuts to both the Huntington Police and Fire departments. That same year, Huntington was also named America’s Best Community and received a grant of $1 million.

“2017 began with us facing an unexpected projected budget def-
cit,” Williams said. “We addressed this crisis in a way that unapologetic and necessary decisions.”

These decisions resulted in cuts to the police and fire depart-
ments leaving 24 city employees without jobs. Williams said the result of the 2017 budget deficit’s decrease came after those re-
ductions. In 2017, Williams projected the deficit would drop by $2.2 million.

“We finished the year in the black, without raising fees or taxes,” Williams said. “Without deploying our reserve funds, with a sur-
plus, and by offering every professional employee who lost their job the opportunity to return.”

“Last year when we came here we were $5 million in the hole,” City Council member Charles McComas said. “This year is different. He is planning on bringing back more policemen, firefighters and fire halls. I’m interested in looking at the budget, but I think he’s done a good job.”

The budget does not specify an addition to fire vehicles, but does plan on adding more police officers, the police vehicles in the 2019 fiscal year and the year after that. With this new fund-
ing to the police and fire department, Interim Police Chief Hank Dial said this funding will help provide a stronger police presence throughout the city.

“We’re going to put feet and backs into investigative roles that we want our agents to provide to the public city.” Dial said. “That invest-
ment is in our street, which is a long way toward making sure that we can do our jobs and do them effectively.”

One of Mayor Williams most poignant moments during the speech was addressing the perception of safety in Huntington and what it means for not only Huntington citizens, but Marshall University students as well.

“We cannot and should not ignore the perception that questions Huntington’s safety,” Williams said. “Downtown Huntington is safe. The students who attend Marshall University are safe. All who visit our town are safe.”

Part of those duties of keeping the city safe entailing addressing the drug epidemic that continues to grow in Huntington. Williams had many strong feelings toward the stigma Huntington has been given due to the drug epidemic.

Some say that Huntington is the epicenter of our nation’s drug problem,” Williams said. “I disagree. I believe that Huntington is the epicenter of the solution.”

He continued by saying that Huntington is more affected by the “disease of hopelessness” than drugs, attributing this hopelessness to the lack of economic opportunity. One of those changes to Huntington’s economy will be the addition of the open-space retail facility on 3rd Avenue, The Market. As for funding the drug crisis, Williams said that he wants to see more funding from Charleston and Washington D.C.

“We meet with state and federal partners,” Williams said. “If God is on our side as much as our leaders in Charleston and Washington excel, then show me the money. We cannot be ex-
cluded from the discussion ourselves.”

Williams bid his address by continuing to push for his agenda “and faith” in that mission.

“We have learned mighty lessons this past year,” Williams said. “We have learned that we can compete with anyone in the nation. We have the expertise and fortitude to set a path of success if we simply dare to have faith in our ability to prevail.”

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SGA discusses firearms and upcoming events on campus

By BRIANA MURPHY
THE PARTHENON

Marshall University Student Government (SGA) started a meeting off by discussing different events it is going to fund for organizations on campus. This includes organizations such as Marshall University Film Club and Boxing Club, both of which are sponsoring an event in the spring.

Student Body President Matt Jarvis spoke on Home Ball 2018, which would allow concealed carry on public college campuses in WV. This means that guns would be allowed at campus events, walgreens, in classrooms, in dorms and in the dining halls. After hearing reactions from students and staff, Jarvis decided to send a letter to the House of Delegates stating that the Marshall University Student Government strongly opposes this issue.

“Simply put, firearms have no place on a college campus.”

- Marshall University Student Government President Matt Jarvis

According to U.S. Legal, Inc., “concealed weapons are weapons, especially handguns, which are kept hidden on one’s person, or under one’s control.”

“Not that something that should be on a college campus,” Wheeler said. “The campus should be a place where everyone feels safe.”

Jarvis also shared that SGA will be trying to figure out a way to donate any unused fire or hard points or meal swipes students have at the end of the semester. Sometimes, students have extra swipes and points at the end of the semester that they do not know what all to do with.

SGA is in the progress of putting together an alternative plan for students to use their extra swipes and points rather than letting them expire.

“As a college in a whole, we need to move a part of the community,” SGA member Lydia Roberts said. “The university has a bad rep-
ation about not doing enough to help the community. We need to better the world by starting small acts to better the community, such as helping to provide support and give back.”

This would be a great way to fulfill that.”

Roberts said when discussing the topic of meal swipes and points that most stu-
dents are frustrated with wasting food and money at the end of the year, and it makes students, especially freshmen who are new, feel “nipped off.” by the amount of money they are wasting.

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Guest romantic authors presented readings at MU Reads Valentine’s Extravaganza

By AMANDA LARCH

The Marshall Library’s MRU Reads program hosted a Valentine’s Day extravaganza with guest romantic writers, a valentine’s card making station and the chance to go on a blind date with a fellow MSU student.

Attendees had the opportunity to create valentines for the Marshall University Counseling Center’s Women’s Advocacy Program, got a sneak peek of upcoming novels by Amy Do...
Herd baseball opens 2018 campaign with road trip, three-game series at Arkansas State

By RICK FARLOW

Thundering Herd baseball begins the 2018 regular season this Friday in Bella Vista, Arkansas, as longtime Head Baseball Coach Jeff Waggoner leads his team to the University of Arkansas for a three-game series on March 9-11.

Marshall comes off a 25-28 over- all win record (12-17 C-USA) in 2017. The Herd finished its 2018 schedule with an 11-game road trip. With four concurrent events at Florida A&M, Miami, Appalachian State and Liberty, the Herd won’t play a home game until March 9.

Waggoner said, going into the season, he and the coaching staff were ready to do their best. “We’re ready to do our best. This is what we have to work on. We’ll work hard. We’ll go out there and play hard.”

Herd out to the Darius Dixon Memorial sponsored by Invitational sponsored by Indiana and once traveling to the Gladstein of the Chris Cline Indoor Athletic Facility down to Birmingham and hopefully have our flu, and we hope to get everyone healthy to go down to the Thundering Herd Invitational.

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Embracing empathy to overcome growing national apathy

By LYDIA WAYBRIGHT

The headlines this week have been heavy. Acutely, headlines this week, this year, this lifetime, have been heavy. Tragedy is nothing new. Sometimes the constant influx of information makes it tempting to detach and forget the realities behind every news story.

While it’s easy to shut out the things that don’t affect us personally, a much more potent response is empathy. To try for a moment to feel what someone else is feeling, regardless of whether it actually affects you—that is powerful. Human beings have the incredible privilege of being able to empathize—to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn.

Politicking things often diminishes empathy. Real, tangible problems become a matter of dinner table debates. Politicians argue over problems they’ve never personally encountered, and cable news anchors shout at one another over issues they don’t understand.

Whenever I read a story, whether it’s historical or fictional or in the news, I sometimes realize that I have just taken in facts, but not let myself sit with the emotions that the people in the story must have felt. I can learn in a news story that, say, a mother lost her child. Right now in Florida, 17 families are struggling to lift their heads. Right now in West Virginia, teachers feel so unappreciated that they aren’t in their classrooms. Right now in Huntington, hundreds of people are so enshrouded in grief, they can’t remember ever feeling hopeful.

When we hear these stories, we tend to hear them as pieces of objective information around which we build an argument for the side we are going to stand on and defend. We draw party lines and we wouldn’t dare cross them. But these issues are so much more complex than that. These issues are about people. How can we ever help find solutions if we forget about the people involved?

Here is my plea, for myself and for you: don’t lose empathy. The world can harden you, but you can’t change anything or help anyone if you are hardened. Remember that every piece of data reflects a person with a story. People are more important than politics, and policy should be about people. Empathy is an absolutely necessary part of solving problems. If we want to promote change, and I think most people do, we have to think about people’s real experiences. We have to remember the lasting consequences behind every headline and every hot topic. We have to remember the people.

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Austin Butler, 17, cries on the shoulder of a friend after a vigil at the Parkland Baptist Church, for the victims of the Wednesday shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. on Thursday. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)
Florida shooting revives debate over gun age requirement

Gun-control advocates counter the laws that modern, militaristic-style long guns people bought for hunting or sport shooting. They were bolt-action shotguns and single-shot rifles and things really popular for hunting or sport shootchasing of rifles and handguns for teenagers. Florida is a state where one of the lead cities like Miami and Orlando, large sections of the state remain rural, conservation and gun-friendly Republicans have held strong majorities in both legislative chambers for the past two decades and have moved more often to expand gun rights than restrict them — leading some gun-control advocates to call the Sanford State the Sanford State. The man designated to be Florida’s next House Speaker, Republican Ron DeSantis, indicated hours after the school shooting that he wouldn’t be in favor of gun restrictions. “You don’t take cars off the road because someone got drunk, used one and killed someone. You don’t take a car off the road because someone rented a 1-D car and ran it into some people in New York City,” Oliva said. Florida is a state where one of the lead Republicans candidates for governor, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam, proudly agreed when a newspaper editorial called him a sellout to the National Rifle Association. Gun-control advocates and even some police officials are holding out hope — albeit a longshot given current political realities — that there will be some steps toward change-age requirements. “An 18-year-old with an AR-15 is completely unmanageable,” said Frank Fernandez, director of public safety for the International Association of Chiefs of Police’s firearms committee. “That is a weapon that is meant for destruction. It is a weapon that can be used to shoot the theater. That is a weapon, we need to do something.”
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