



**Bluegrass is back**

America's Bluegrass Gospel Show will do its spring taping tonight in Ashland  
Life / 3C

**Slip into some sandals**

**8555**  
Weather / 8A



**A future in the pros?**

Spillman's agent discusses MU defensive back's draft chances  
Sports / 1B



# The Herald-Dispatch

Huntington, West Virginia

www.herald-dispatch.com

Home 50¢

1909-2009  
**100th**  
ANNIVERSARY  
**FRIDAY**  
April 24, 2009



## DOWNTOWN ART

Local artists featured in Create Huntington's downtown community gallery **COMMUNITY, 1C**



**Herd needs a leader**

Herd lacks go-to wide receiver while two prospects are out with injuries during preseason practices and Saturday's spring game.  
Sports / 1B

**Citizens pitch in for cleanup**

Volunteers across Huntington will wage war on litter, graffiti and weeds over the next week during the city's inaugural "Clean Sweep."  
Local / 3A

**Tree teaches tangible lesson**

Students at Southside Elementary got to make their own impact on Earth Day with a new Red Oak tree that was planted outside the school.  
Community / 1C

**Lawrence in line for money**

Lawrence County is in line to get another \$5.4 million in federal stimulus money for the Union-Rome sewer district and for water improvements in the village of Coal Grove, according to the Ohio Environmental Protection.  
Region / 2A

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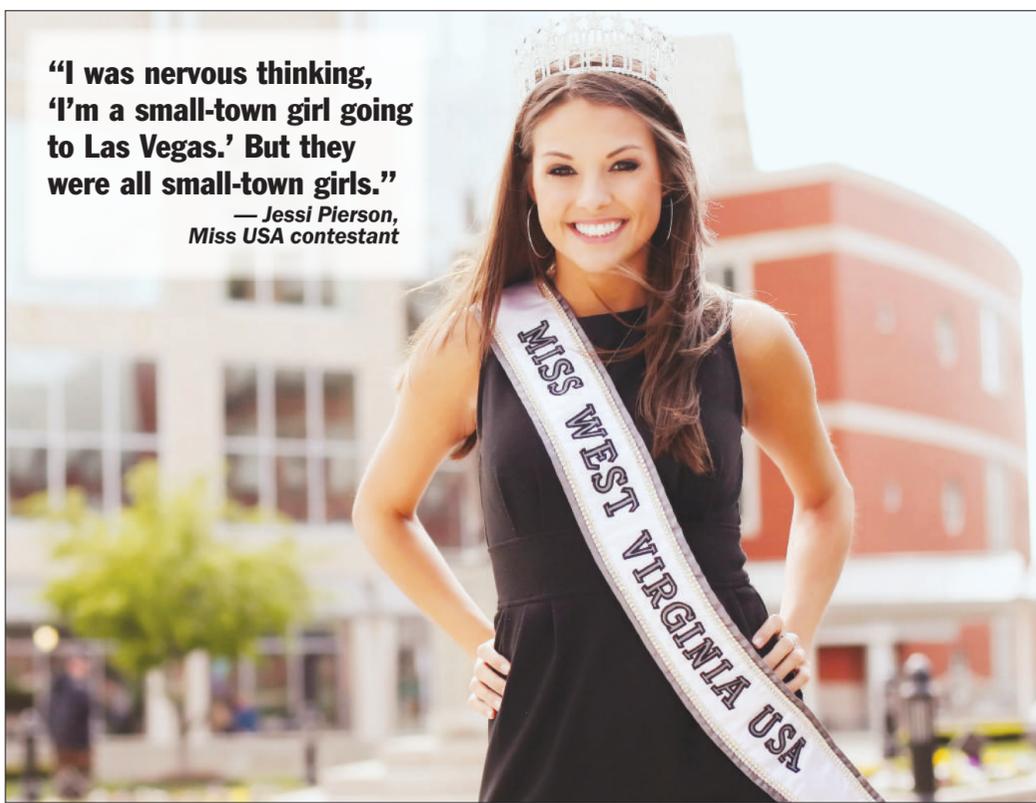
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## 'SMALL-TOWN GIRL' THRILLED WITH SUCCESS

**"I was nervous thinking, 'I'm a small-town girl going to Las Vegas.' But they were all small-town girls."**  
— Jessi Pierson, Miss USA contestant



Mark Webb/The Herald-Dispatch

Miss West Virginia USA Jessi Pierson poses for a portrait on Wednesday at Marshall University. She made it to the Top 10 at the Miss USA Pageant in Las Vegas on Sunday, April 19, and won Most Photogenic.

### Whirlwind pageant trip full of surprises for contestant

By JEAN TARBETT HARDIMAN  
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HUNTINGTON — Jessi Pierson wasn't sure what to expect at the Miss USA pageant in Las Vegas.

What she did know was that, as Miss West Virginia USA, she had to be out there three weeks in advance of last Sunday's competition for publicity events, photo shoots and practice. And she knew that she'd need two to three outfits per day, which required her to ship clothes to Vegas in boxes, and pay extra for her oversized luggage and her carry-ons at the airport.

What she did not know was what the other women in the competition would be like. She'd heard the pageant horror stories, but she was pleasantly

**Upcoming pageants**

■ Brittani Chase Mills, of Huntington, was crowned 2009 Miss West Virginia United States. She will compete for the title of Miss United States the week of July 11 in Las Vegas.

■ The 2009 Mrs. West Virginia America Pageant will be May 22-23 at Pullman Plaza Hotel in Huntington. Married women from across the state will compete to represent the state at the Mrs. America Pageant.

surprised at what she found. "Everyone was so nice," she said. "I was nervous, thinking, 'I'm a small-town

**Photos Online**

For more photos of Miss West Virginia USA Jessi Pierson, go to our photo galleries at [www.herald-dispatch.com](http://www.herald-dispatch.com).

girl going to Las Vegas.' But they were all small-town, sweet girls. I was not expecting that at all."

As for herself, "I can be a high-heels, fancy-dress pageant girl, but I like fishing and hunting," she said.

She once caught a 22-pound catfish, and she has a hot pink hunting bow.

Another pleasant surprise for this Marshall University graduate was how well she did in the competition, advancing into

Please see **MISS WV/4A**

Please see **FEE/4A**

## Gas line rupture in Wayne prompts area evacuation

By KYLA ASBURY  
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WAYNE — Businesses in and around Builder's Supply and the Wal-Mart Plaza on U.S. 152 in Wayne were evacuated for about half an hour after a vehicle struck a natural gas line about 4 p.m. Thursday, Wayne County authorities said.

About 50 people were evacuated from Builder's Supply and KFC as a precaution, and U.S. 152 was shut down in that area for about 25 minutes. Wayne Elementary School also was evacuated.

A Chevy Cavalier rolled into a natural gas meter in front of Builder's Supply, rupturing a gas line and injuring the car's owner in the process.

Wayne Peterson said when he parked the car at Builder's Supply, he inadvertently left it in drive instead of putting it into park.

"I guess I just forgot to put it in park. So when I came back out, I thought my car wouldn't start, so I tried to jump it," Peterson said.

When Peterson went under his car to try to get it started, the car started to slowly go forward, rolling over him.

"I was still under it, and it just started rolling. I didn't realize what was going on, I just

felt the pain and the burning," Peterson said.

Peterson said he suffered burns from contacting hot engine parts, an injured shoulder, bruises and a swollen knee. He declined being taken to a hospital.

"I'm glad it wasn't worse than it really was. I could have died," he said. "I definitely won't forget and leave my car in drive again, that's for sure. Today turned out different than expected."

Wayne Police Chief Gary Porter said at first people thought a propane tank had been hit.

Porter said workers nearby were able to quickly shut off the natural gas line.

Keith Nelson from Builder's Supply said he was more worried about the people in the store than anyone else.

"You never know what could happen, and we didn't want any of the customers harmed," Nelson said.

Consumers Gas Utility Co. repaired the leak around 4:20 p.m.

Several agencies responded to the incident, including Wayne County Sheriff's Department, Wayne Police Department, West Virginia State Police, Wayne Volunteer Fire Department and Lavalette Volunteer Fire Department.

## Wildfire spreads near Myrtle Beach

The governor declared a state of emergency for the county and five schools closed because of dense smoke as a coastal wildfire spread Thursday in North Myrtle Beach, S.C. The fire blazed near one of the busiest tourist stretches in South Carolina, burning dozens of homes and forcing hundreds to flee in the middle of the night.

Police banged on doors to awaken residents overnight as strong winds helped the blaze cut a four-mile-wide swath through forests and scrub toward the Barefoot Landing development, a sprawling complex of houses, condominiums and golf courses separated from the main route through Myrtle Beach by the Intracoastal Waterway.

North Myrtle Beach Mayor Marilyn Hatley said by midmorning the fire at the development had mostly died out, but police still stopped residents from returning to the homes there.

"This is a natural disaster," Hatley said.

Read more about the fire on 7A

