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## Arthurdale Heritage plans expansion

by Kathy Plum STAFF WRITER

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An outdoor event space planned by Arthurdale Heritage would be completed in three stages, with Phase 1 planned for  
Submitted photo

KINGWOOD — Arthurdale Heritage Inc. “is on the cusp of some dramatic improvements,” Director Darlene Bolyard told the Preston County Commission last week.

Negotiations are under way to extend the Deckers Creek Trail from Reedsville into Arthurdale, she said.

“By doing so, it would greatly benefit Arthurdale, the whole end of the county, as well as Reedsville and further up the trail to Preston County,” she said.

One of the things needed with that expansion is to have a septic system in place there and at the former Arthurdale School buildings. AHI is talking with the Town of Reedsville about that, she said. She could also see partnering with West Preston School on a high-efficiency system.

Arthurdale is also working toward construction of a mixed use commercial and rental space adjacent to the Center Hall.

“This will be a \$2.5 million structure,” Bolyard said. “It will be an enhanced visitors center. It will be a rental tea room. We already have somebody interested who has significant experience and a proven track record for that space.”

The middle part will be three commercial rental spaces, and a dentist is interested in one of those, she said.

“We are rebuilding what was there and burned down in the '70s,” Bolyard said.

Arthurdale currently has a weaving program, which Preston County Schools participate in, and is planning a two-story weaving building.

“Weaving is something that if you’re 70 or 7, you get it, you can do it together,” Bolyard said.

It's only one of the programs offered by the organization.

"We have more demand than we have teachers and space," Bolyard said. The hiring of Elizabeth Satterfield as curator and director of education, growth will continue, she said.

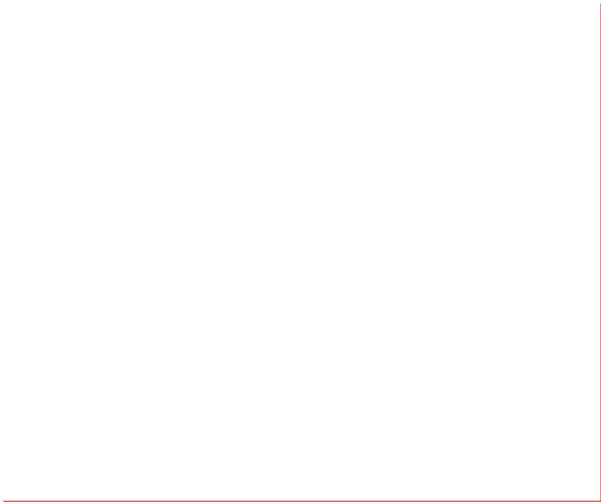
AHI is going to four potential funding sources for help with the \$2.5-million space, she said.

By the end of this year, Arthurdale also wants to have an outdoor events space completed behind the Center Hall. Phase I will require \$31,300 to finish, and Bolyard asked the commission to help with that.

Commissioners said they would add it to their list of requests for consideration.

That will pay to put down drainage and gravel, and making the site ADA compliant.

The space will be used for weather-related children's activities, as well as rented out for weddings and other events.



“We’re really going to need this space when the trail is hooked up and people want to come in and have picnics and things like that,” Bolyard said.

AHI has already started taking food truck applications for the space, she said.

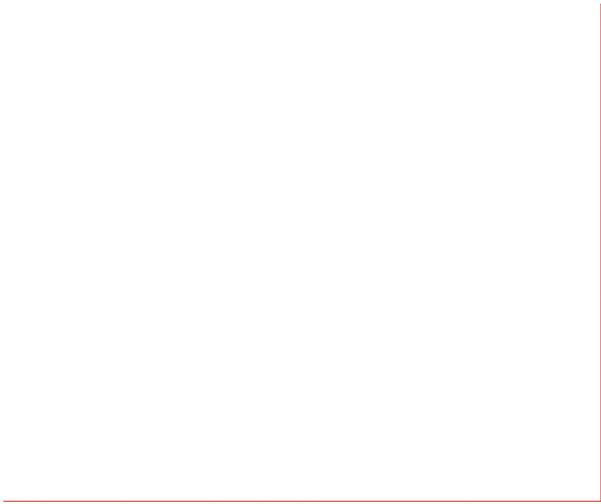
Phase 2 will be putting a concrete floor and a roof onto the space. Phase 3 would be adding some walls but keeping it a mostly open space.

Bolyard said Arthurdale is working with a private foundation to put a trades school for historic skills like blacksmithing, welding and stone masonry in place. Historic preservationists are sought after and make good money, she said.

“Our mission in 1934 was community development, and it has become historic preservation. We are quickly moving into community development,” Bolyard said. “In order for Arthurdale Heritage to stay relevant, we must help our community.”

All these things are part of the long-term strategy that will help AHI become financially independent, she said.

In another teaching venture, AHI invited the Preston County Arts Center to set up shop in Arthurdale after its Kingwood location closed. Arthurdale hired a teacher and is applying for a grant to pay part of her salary, Bolyard said. She will be asking the commission to pay a portion of the teacher’s salary, too.



Satterfield, a Preston County native, said a lot of programs are being ramped up. Through an after school program one day a week, students will be producing videos for a Smithsonian program. The films will be broadcast nationally by the end of the school year.

About 50 students are involved with the program.

There are also adult classes in weaving and blacksmithing, and square dancing will return this year. Craft shows are held, and more than 40 local artists' work is sold in the craft shop.

And the New Deal Festival will be July 9.

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