

Monument will celebrate Pound's mining history

The town of Pound, Virginia, located just off U.S. Route 23 in Wise County and only a few miles from the Letcher County line, is preparing to celebrate its deep Appalachian labor history with a new public monument in its historic downtown.

For the past two years, Pound residents and town leaders have been working to revitalize the community through projects aimed at strengthening flood and landslide resilience and addressing long-neglected buildings. Among those efforts, an upcoming labor-focused monument stands out as a tribute to the town's coal mining roots and the people who built the community.

In a report in The Appalachian Voice, Rance Garrison writes that funding for the monument was awarded last year through Monuments Across Appalachian Virginia, an initiative based at Virginia Tech and supported by the Mellon Foundation. The program focuses on elevating stories of working people and communities whose histories have often been overlooked or erased.

From the beginning, Pound residents played a central role in shaping the project. Through a series of listening sessions, community members shared photographs, memories and personal stories with the two artists commissioned to design the monument: Dana Jo Cooley of Nashville and Johnny Hagerman, a Tazewell County artist who teaches brick sculpture at Southwest Virginia Community College in Cedar Bluff.

Hagerman said one of the most rewarding aspects of the project has been working alongside his students.

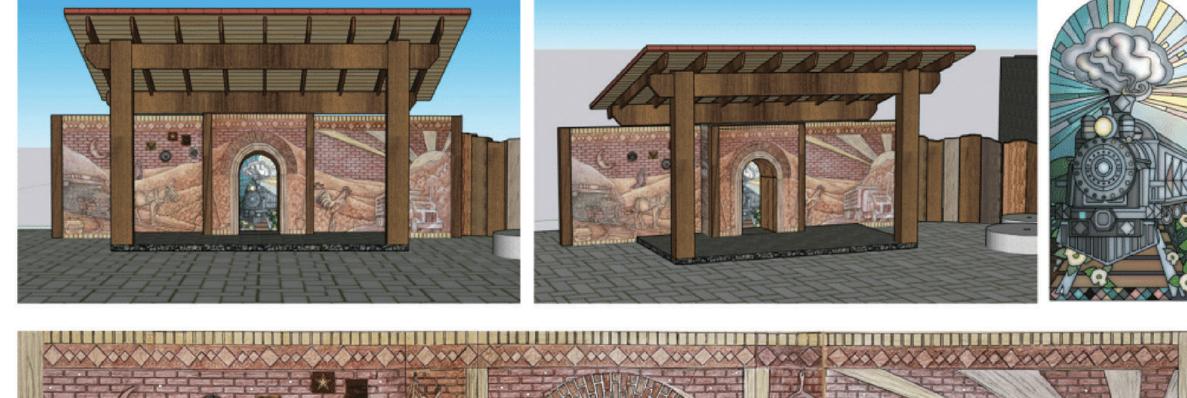
"I have two students that have fingerprints all over this project," he said, noting that one attends Radford University and another studies at UVA Wise, just a short drive from Pound.

The monument is part of a broader partnership between the town and Appalachian Voices, the non-profit organization that publishes The Appalachian Voice. That collaboration includes landslide mitigation, downtown revitalization efforts and participation in the Community Strong initiative, which supports community-driven resilience projects across several coalfield towns.

Plans for the monument are closely tied to the development of a pocket park at the former People's Bank site in downtown Pound. The building was demolished in January, and community feedback made it clear that residents wanted the monument to be functional, not merely decorative. As a result, the design will double as a small amphitheater and performance space, intended to anchor the new gathering area.

An advisory committee made up of town officials, residents, artists and other stakeholders met regularly throughout the planning process. Members received stipends through the Monuments Across Appalachian Virginia program to ensure broad participation and accountability.

For Cooley, the project carries deep personal meaning. She grew up in Whitwell, Tennessee, where



This is an artist's drawing of the Labor In Motion sculpture in Pound, Virginia. It is part of the Monuments Across Appalachian Virginia.

her father, uncle and cousin were among 13 miners killed in a coal mine explosion in 1981. She said that loss shaped both her outlook on life and her work as an artist.

"You're not guaranteed a whole life," Cooley said. "That experience taught me to follow my heart and be determined about what matters."

Cooley said the Pound project has strengthened her commitment to public art and inspired her to pursue further work at the intersection of art and public policy.

The monument's design reflects the many forms of labor that sustained Pound over generations. Alongside references to coal mining, it includes tributes to women's domestic labor, librarians who served the community, and families whose faith helped carry them through difficult times. Design elements include canning jars, books, a broom handle and a set of praying hands modeled after Cooley's mother.

Rather than depicting people directly, the artists chose to let the community become the living centerpiece. The stage will host performances and events, while symbolic elements—such as a coal train, a mining tunnel, a mule pulling a coal cart, and animals like a rooster—tell the story of work in the coalfields.

Stained glass and handmade marbles created by glass artist Seth Cox will also be incorporated into the structure. Made using silver mist and coal dust, the marbles resemble starry constellations and will play a role beyond the monument itself.

Pound Vice Mayor Leabern Kennedy said the town plans to launch a countywide "marble hunt" to build excitement around the project. The scavenger-style

game will involve hiding marbles and posting clues through the "Pound Has Lost Its Marbles" Facebook group, encouraging residents and visitors to explore the area.

The idea is modeled after a similar event in Marion County, Tennessee, and Wise County marbles will feature coal themes as well as local folklore, including references to the Woodbooger, a regional version of Bigfoot.

Town leaders hope the monument and pocket park will provide a much-needed gathering place for festivals, concerts, farmers markets and food truck events, boosting downtown activity and the local economy.

Construction and installation work is expected to begin in February, with a public unveiling planned for later this spring.

Asked what she hopes the monument brings to the community, Cooley offered a simple answer: "Joy."

— Source: Rance Garrison, The Appalachian Voice

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Sealed Bids will be received, opened, and immediately read aloud at 2:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 27, for the MCHC Nursing Training Center Project. The bids will be received at Mountain Comprehensive Administration Office, 10 E Main Street, Whitesburg, KY 41858.

The project site is located at 38 College Dr, Whitesburg, KY. The bid is to furnish all necessary labor, materials, tools, machinery, warranties, and all other items required to meet the plans and specifications. Work to include, but not limited to: Interior finishes, casework, new doors/windows, Electric, Plumbing, HVAC, Fire Protection.

Interested Contractors shall attend a mandatory pre-bid conference on Wednesday, January 21 at 10:00 a.m. at the project site.

No bid may be withdrawn for a period of 60 days after the opening. Each bid must include a bid security in the amount of 5% of the total bid in the form of a certified check, cashier's check, irrevocable letter of credit, or surety company bond made payable to Mountain Comprehensive Health Corporation.

If a bid security in the amount of 5% of the full bid amount is submitted with the bid, the successful bidder will be required to furnish a performance bond and labor and material bond from an acceptable surety in the amount of 100% of the full contract amount. If a bid guarantee bond in the amount of 100% of the total bid is submitted with the bid, no additional performance and labor and material bond will be required.

The contract documents have been prepared by Summit Architects + Engineers, 3205 Summit Square Place, Lexington, KY 40509. For additional information or questions, send email inquiries to Winfrey Kirkpatrick, wkirkpatrick@summitae.com or phone 859-264-9860. Copies of the documents may be purchased from Lynn Imaging, 328 East Vine Street, Lexington, KY, 40507, (859) 255-1021 or www.lynnimaging.com.

All provisions of the Kentucky Revised Code as it relates to bid guarantee's conditions, liabilities, and withdrawal of a bid are applicable to this contract. The owner reserves the right to waive any informality or to accept any bid which is deemed most favorable. The owner also reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

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Adv: 1/7, 1/14, 1/21



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