

Community Spotlight

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Image courtesy of West Virginia's Retailer's Association

“Almost Heaven”

West Virginia & Independent Retailers at Their Best

West Virginia is known as “Almost Heaven” as much for its gorgeous mountain topography and roaring whitewater as it is for its rich cultural traditions and the never-met-a-stranger disposition of its people.

That heritage, passed down from generation to generation, has forged a do-it-yourself attitude which is apparent throughout the state, and possibly most visible in our historic downtowns and quaint neighborhood shopping districts.

West Virginia’s retail merchants are the backbone of our local economies and in many instances the welcome mat to our state and its people. The West Virginia Retailers Association is proud to represent this diverse group and honored to showcase a few examples in the pages of this publication.



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Independent Spotlights

Towns across the state are dotted with local jewelry stores designing, selling, and repairing unique items, and in many cases, works of art. Calvin Broyles Jewelers, headquartered in a town near Charleston by the name of Spring Hill, is a perfect example of a vibrant ever-expanding West Virginia family-owned business.

The company, which was founded by Calvin Broyles in 1946, continues today under the stewardship of his sons’ David and Don Broyles. They’ve grown the business to include three locations across the state. And, possibly most telling of the company’s success, seven members of the family are employed in the business.



Kelley's Men Shop, a Charleston landmark, is another great example of a local business that is ever evolving with the retail landscape of the state. Started in 1934 by Orris Kelley and his wife on a corner lot in the historic West Side district of the city, the company began by selling conservative clothing for the well-dressed man. Everyone who was anyone shopped at Kelley's.

After more than 80 years in business, which saw the involvement of different local family owners, the company is evolving with today's retail environment. Kristi Walker, a family member involved in the business, took the helm in recent years and has reshaped the company into a leaner, more defined specialty purveyor of men's clothing. Now known as Kelley's On Bridge, the company is located in a boutique retail district situated in Charleston's South Hills neighborhood.

The move was a smart one. Surrounded by other unique specialty retailers and upscale, yet casual, restaurants, the Shops On Bridge Road is a charming neighborhood shopping area.

Like the Shops On Bridge, Charleston – West Virginia's Capitol city – offers several different local retailer hubs. One of the most unique may be the Capitol Market located in the old warehouse district of the city.

Homegrown Charm

Situated in a splendidly refurbished railroad freight station, the Capitol Market is home to a year-round outdoor market and an eclectic collection of indoor shops featuring fresh fish, meat and produce, as well as books, wines, chocolates, West Virginia foods and one of the city's most popular restaurants.

The facility is one of the city's anchor establishments, drawing locals and visitors who come to share a cup of coffee, eat a good meal, purchase local grown or produced goods and much more. The retailers operating in the Capitol Market are all true West Virginians – whether farmers, grocers, chocolate and wine purveyors or restaurateurs. For a taste of the true flavor of West Virginia



Image courtesy of West Virginia's Retailer's Association

– both its goods and its people – the Capitol Market is the place to go.

The movement to produce homegrown products using locally sourced ingredients has swept across the state, and frankly, it likely has been here all along. One great example of this is the thriving spirits industry, which is supported by more than 170 retail establishments across the state.

The many unique mini-distilleries scattered throughout the state not only produce outstanding products – like moonshine, bourbon, vodka and a variety of specialty liquors – but have become a draw for tourists who desire a true experience on their travels. One perfect example of this is Hatfield & McCoy Moonshine located in the southern mountains, in the town of Gilbert.

Handed down for generations, the recipe used to make Hatfield & McCoy Moonshine is as authentic and original as the mountains and streams that bear the family names. The original recipe belongs to Devil Anse Hatfield and is currently produced in small, hand-

made batches, six days a week, on original Hatfield land.

Another example is the Appalachian Distillery in Ripley, which channels the history and skill set of moonshiners' of old. Smooth Ambler Spirits in Lewisburg is making a name for itself nationally as a purveyor of fine liquor products – like bourbon, vodka and corn whiskey.

And speaking of Lewisburg, there is no finer representation of southern Appalachian hospitality that what you'll find in this historic town.

"Coolest" Small Town

Tucked away in the hills of the Greenbrier Valley, the picture perfect main street of Lewisburg (featured on the front cover of this magazine) offers a unique visitor experience complete with specialty retailers, eclectic restaurants and a full calendar of local events. It's no wonder Lewisburg was voted the Coolest Small Town in America in 2011! The town has also been named as a Distinctive Destination by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and recognized as a Top Southern Mountain Town in America. Whether spending just a few hours or staying a few days in one of their quaint bed and breakfasts or legendary historic inns, it's immediately obvious why the area has received these honors.

The downtown, condensed primarily into 3-4 blocks, has more than 50 shops, restaurants, performance halls, realtors and other establishments. The stores include outdoor recreation, specialty foods, art galleries, gift shops, antiques, women's clothing, furniture, a high-end shoe outlet, bookstores, sports/recreation shop and yarn/knitting supplies. And, the Greenbrier Valley Visitors Center is the perfect first stop for out-of-towners.

One of Lewisburg's main attractions is the Stardust Café. This popular local restaurant opened in 2005 and is renowned for its sustainable practices, like using locally sourced ingredients. As just one example, the beef used in the restaurants' hamburgers come from cattle raised less than 5 miles away. All its baked goods are locally made as well. And as a quick recommendation should you visit, their famous "Trust Me Salad" was featured in a Southern Living cookbook. Delicious!



Image courtesy of West Virginia's Retailer's Association

Lewisburg offers locals and visitors alike a great place to shop and dine while experiencing arts and culture. Of course, no shopping experience would be complete without checking out the nearby Greenbrier Resort and the retail shops located within it. A great time to visit is in July as the Greenbrier hosts the PGA's annual Greenbrier Classic Golf Tournament. Additionally, the town is also within easy driving distance to the New River Gorge National Park – an East Coast mecca for whitewater rafting and outdoor adventure.

The West Virginia Retailers Association is proud to support the rich heritage and service-focused culture that family-owned businesses create for shoppers across West Virginia. From north to south and east to west, West Virginia offers a diverse retail experience made up of true West Virginians doing what they love and living the traditions past down to them over the generations. If that's not Almost Heaven, I don't know what is. Discover more about the West Virginia Retailers Association [here!](#)