

ROBERT C. BYRD
CENTER FOR
LEGISLATIVE STUDIES



Robert C. Byrd Center
for CONGRESSIONAL HISTORY AND EDUCATION
2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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JAMES J. WYATT Ph.D.
DIRECTOR

Jay was appointed Director of the Byrd Center in 2018 after serving as Director of Programs and Research for five years. He leads the Center's community outreach and programming initiatives at the local, state, and national levels, develops and oversees its research projects, and coordinates its oral history program. Under Jay's leadership, the Byrd Center continues to be a respected hub for bi-partisan programs and research that engages and informs audiences about the U.S. Congress, the Constitution, and American representative democracy in both historical and contemporary contexts.

Jay is the past president of the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress, a national alliance of organizations and institutions that promote the study of the United States Congress. He also teaches courses on American History and public history for Shepherd University's History Department.



JODY M. BRUMAGE
ARCHIVIST AND OFFICE MANAGER

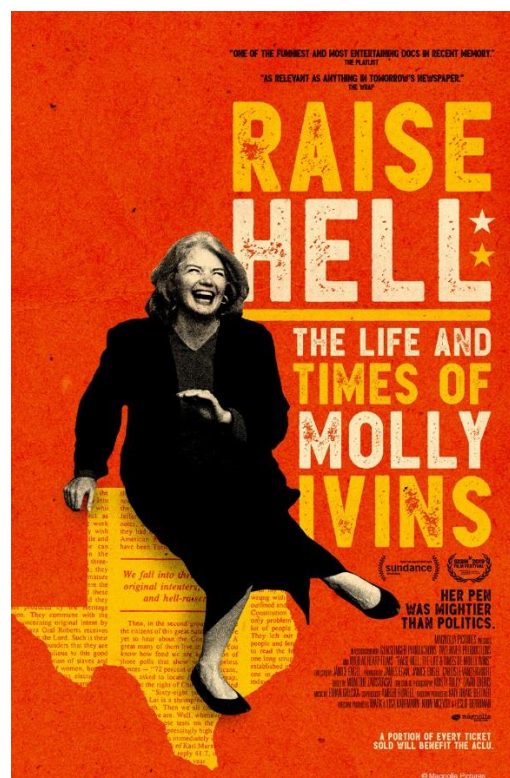
Jody has been a member of the Byrd Center's staff since 2013 after completing a two-year internship. Working with researchers and educators, Jody develops learning resources and lesson plans from the Byrd Center's archives. He also conducts research and writes for the Byrd Center's blog, interpreting records from the archival collections. Jody oversees the student internship program and curated the digital exhibit and learning module *Redeveloping Appalachia: Legislating the Future of West Virginia*. Jody is active in the Society of American Archivists, the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress and the Appalachian Studies Association. He teaches the Introduction to Archives course for the Historic Preservation and Public History program at Shepherd University. Jody is also the President of the South Mountain Heritage Society.



Year in Review

JANUARY 2020

► We concluded the 2019 Teacher Institute with a workshop for West Virginia educators hosted at the Byrd Center in Shepherdstown. The workshop offered lesson plans for “Teaching about Congress and the Constitution in Four Periods of American History.” Among these lesson plans demonstrated in this workshop was *Redeveloping Appalachia*, a learning module created from over 100 primary sources preserved in Senator Robert C. Byrd and Congressman Harley O. Staggers, Sr.’s papers in the Byrd Center’s archives.



► On January 22nd, the Byrd Center hosted a screening of the documentary *Raise Hell: The Life and Times of Molly Ivins*. The film drew one of the largest audiences for a screening and was followed with a discussion led by Byrd Center Director Dr. Jay Wyatt.

FEBRUARY 2020

► Economic historian and political journalist Nancy Bradeen Spannaus gave a lecture on her book *Hamilton versus Wall street: The Core Principles of the American System of Economics* at the Byrd Center. This book talk was co-sponsored by the Byrd Center and Four Seasons Bookstore in Shepherdstown.



MARCH 2020

► The Byrd Center closed its offices on March 16th and the staff began working remotely in accordance with Shepherd University's decision to suspend in-person instruction due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

APRIL 2020

► The Board of Directors and staff worked to reach out and engage former staffers of Senator Robert C. Byrd with the programs and initiatives of the Byrd Center. Several of these former staffers became Friends of the Byrd Center and joined us over the summer for a virtual reunion during which they met the center's staff members.



MAY 2020

► We held our first virtual Friends of the Byrd Center meeting on May 19th where supporters were urged to join the effort to raise awareness of our funding needs. A new stratified annual giving framework was introduced, and the meeting inspired several community members to begin recruiting volunteers for a steering committee to assist in the effort.

► Our staff worked closely with Dr. Charles Flanagan, Director of Outreach for the National Archives and Records Administration's Center for Legislative Archives to develop inquiry-based learning modules. These lesson plans diverged from the traditional model used by the Byrd Center, but enabled us to conduct the Fifth Annual Teacher Institute virtually.

► On May 26th, we welcomed four Shepherd University students into the Byrd Center's first virtual internship project. Patrick Fuller, Victoria Myers, Erik Minyard, and Allison Wharton completed their internship experience by conducting research and writing new blog and social media posts using resources from the Byrd Center's archives.

JUNE 2020

► The Byrd Center's offices re-opened under COVID-19 safety protocols.

► Our first two virtual programs were delivered by the Byrd Center Archivist Jody Brumage exploring consequential presidential elections in West Virginia's political history. The first program on June 9th looked at the impact of Barry Goldwater's campaign in 1964 and the second, on June 24th, revisited John F. Kennedy's tour of West Virginia in 1960, laying the groundwork for the Appalachian Regional Development Act passed in 1965.



► On June 22nd, the Byrd Center's first virtual Teacher Institute workshop was held with 24 educators from West Virginia and Maryland. Each workshop in the 2020 Teacher Institute was conducted in two three-hour segments over two days. A second workshop was held the following week on June 29th and 30th.



JULY 2020

► Friends of the Byrd Center had the opportunity to participate in one of our inquiry-based learning modules when Jody Brumage led a virtual demonstration of the lesson plan *African American Civil Rights: The Reconstruction Era* on July 8th.

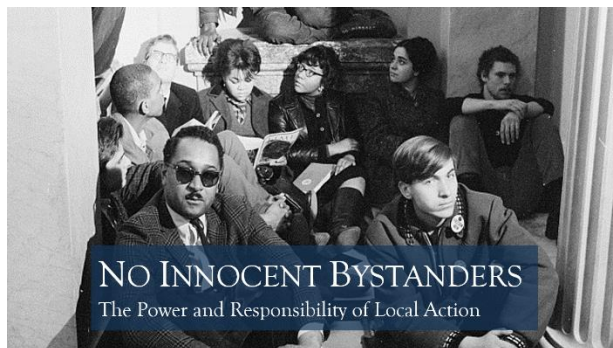


► Dr. Michael E. Woods, Associate Professor of History at the University of Tennessee - Knoxville, presented the important story of the Gag Rule, a device used by pro-slavery factions of the U.S. House of Representatives during the Antebellum period to block citizen petitions for abolition and increased civil rights for Black Americans. Dr. Wood's lecture was held virtually on July 22nd.

► Two more virtual workshops of the Byrd Center Teacher Institute were held in July. These sessions drew forty educators from West Virginia, Maryland, and northern Virginia. Each workshop explored how the U.S. Constitution and the legislative branch responded to, and sometimes were changed by, moments of crisis in American history. The first day of workshops explored three domestic issues while the second day's modules focused on international affairs.

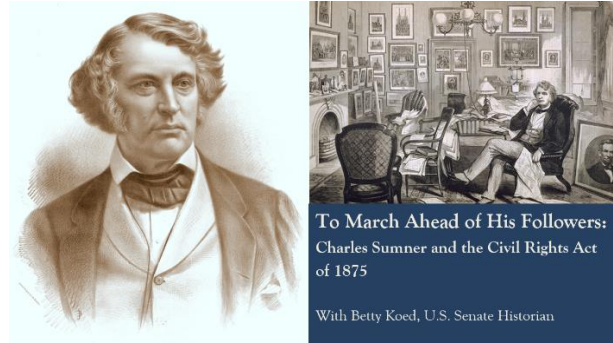
AUGUST 2020

► Shepherd University Associate Professor of History Dr. Julia Sandy gave the lecture “No Innocent Bystanders: The Power and Responsibility of Local Action,” exploring how Black New Yorkers in the early-1960s used the advantages of their location to help cultivate a national Black freedom movement. The August 12th lecture was delivered virtually and was the second in a series of programs illuminating the historic fight against systemic racism in the United States.



► The first meeting of the Friends of the Byrd Center Steering Committee brought together nearly two-dozen community members as well as faculty of Shepherd University in the shared interest of leveraging a diverse array of talents and expertise to initiate a campaign for providing foundational support for the center. The committee resolved to focus on lending support in four critical areas: fundraising, marketing/publicity, program planning, and grant identification/writing.

► The fifth workshop of the Byrd Center Teacher Institute was held virtually on August 3rd and 4th with twenty-two educators participating.



► U.S. Senate Historian Betty Koed presented a history of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1875, spearheaded by Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner. The short-lived legislation attempted to codify the Civil Rights protections gained by African Americans during the Reconstruction Era following the Civil War. Though the act was overturned by the Supreme Court less than a decade after it went into effect, Sumner's Civil Rights Act nonetheless shaped the effort to overcome systemic racism in the United States for more than a century after its short life. The lecture was held on August 26th.

SEPTEMBER 2020

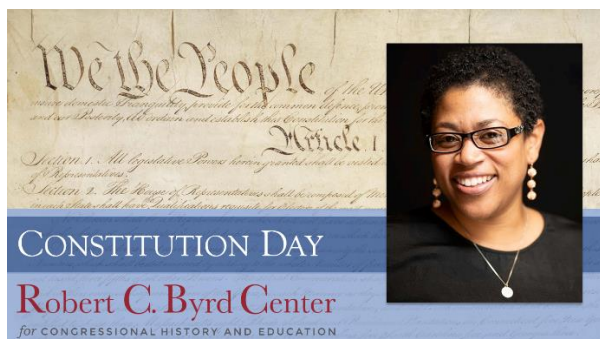
► The Byrd Center welcomed author and long-time congressional staffer Bradford M. Kane to discuss his book *Pitchfork Populism: Ten Political Forces that Shaped an Election and Continue to Change America* on September 9th.



PITCHFORK POPULISM



► A sixth virtual workshop for the Teacher Institute was held on September 12th and 19th, shifted to a weekend schedule to accommodate educators after the start of the academic year.



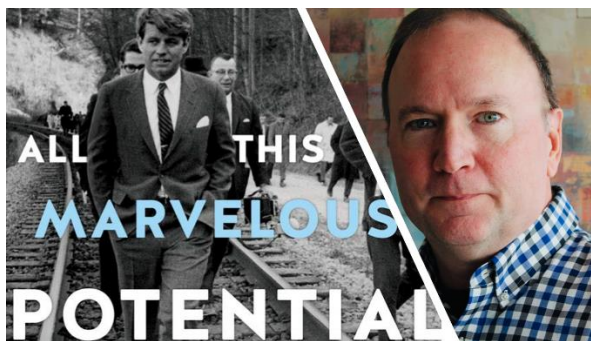
► Dr. Sabrina Dent, Senior Faith Advisor for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, delivered the Sixteenth Annual Tom E. Moses Memorial Lecture on the United States Constitution. Dr. Dent's lecture entitled "The Morality of Freedom: Re-imagining the Promises of the U.S. Constitution," was delivered virtually from the Byrd Center on Constitution Day, September 17th. Dr. Dent's lecture was attended by seventy people during the live feed. The 2020 Constitution Day Lecture was dedicated in memory of the Hon. John R. Lewis, titan of the Civil Rights movement and long-serving Congressman representing Georgia.

► The Byrd Center worked closely with our colleagues in Shepherd University's Center for Appalachian Studies and Communities to facilitate a virtual format of the Appalachian Heritage Writer-in-Residence program which featured author Dorothy Allison. The week-long program featured eight events which were hosted in the Auditorium for on-site speakers. Audiences engaged virtually via Zoom and YouTube.

OCTOBER 2020

► The Friends of the Byrd Center Steering Committee held a virtual gathering with supporters to announce a campaign to raise \$200,000.00 by January 31, 2021 to provide funds that will enable the Byrd Center's leadership and its community advocates to identify and pursue funding for the long-term operation of the center. Through a generous anonymous donor, the campaign was invigorated by the pledge of a matching gift of \$60,000.00.

► The Byrd Center welcomed award-winning journalist and author Matthew Algeo to discuss his book "All This Marvelous Potential: Robert Kennedy's 1968 Tour of Appalachia" on Wednesday, October 9th. By shedding light on the profound needs of the Appalachian Region, Algeo reveals how Kennedy directly addressed the shortcomings of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and criticized members of his own party.



► On October 17th and 24th, the Byrd Center held the seventh of its virtual Teacher Institute workshops. At the conclusion of this session, more than 130 educators from across West Virginia and neighboring states had participated in this year's Institute.

► Dr. Kate Scott, Associate Historian of the United States Senate, gave a lecture entitled “The Shame of America: The New Deal Senate and the Federal Anti-Lynching Bill” on October 29th. In response to lynch mobs that murdered more than 4,700 Americans between the Civil War and World War II, Senate progressives worked closely with racial justice advocates in 1934 to introduce a federal anti-lynching bill. After years of debate, the Senate failed to approve it, revealing the limits of progressive reform during the New Deal era.



NOVEMBER 2020

► The Byrd Center launched *Of, By, and For All People*, a digital series of programs and learning resources revealing the long and arduous struggle for equal treatment under the law faced by Black Americans throughout our nation’s history. This digital resource includes six virtual programs and four lesson plans, all of which is available for free.

► The West Virginia Humanities Council awarded the Byrd Center a grant to support the expansion of the 2021 Teacher Institute to serve six communities across West Virginia. An additional grant to support the Teacher Institute in Berkeley County was awarded by the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation.





Director's Report

Introduction:

2020 has been a tumultuous and unprecedented year at the Byrd Center, defined in large part by the disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and our successful efforts to pivot and meet the moment.

The COVID-19 public health crisis forced substantial changes to the Byrd Center's daily operations that will likely continue at least into the summer of 2021. However, with the help and support of the Congressional Education Foundation (CEF) Board of Directors and the Byrd Center's many local supporters, we navigated these upheavals well. We explored new modes of conducting programming, and we made substantial progress toward pivoting the Byrd Center toward a more stable financial future.

In March, the first wave of the pandemic necessitated the closing of the Byrd Center and the cancellation of all in-person events at the center. Our staff followed Shepherd University's COVID protocols and policies and worked remotely from our homes from mid-March through June 1, when we returned to working at the center each day. Throughout the summer, university staff gradually returned to campus, though the Byrd Center and university buildings largely remained closed to the public. During this period, we worked closely with Shepherd administrators and staff to prepare for the return of students and the reopening of the physical campus in August. We adhered to the university's safety protocols and its revised fall semester calendar. The Byrd Center reopened for classes and periodic campus meetings in August with staff responsible for marking social distancing and sanitizing each room following its use. Ongoing health and safety concerns among students and faculty about the virus contributed to a fairly chaotic start to the semester however, several classes, initially scheduled to include some measure of in-person instruction at the Byrd Center, shifted to a fully remote format within a few weeks. By the end of the fall semester, two in-person classes were held in the Byrd Center each week. The virus' dramatic resurgence this fall prompted Shepherd administrators

to adopt a revised calendar for the spring semester and to maintain the moratorium on in-person events until further notice. The Byrd Center is scheduled to host five in-person classes in the spring.

Programs

Closing the Byrd Center in March also forced the cancellation of almost all of our spring programs, including the highly anticipated evening events with Chuck Keiffer and author Heath Hardage Lee, though each speaker has agreed to reschedule when it is safe to convene in person. The continuance of social distancing protocols and other COVID-related safety measures then forced us to pivot our summer and fall programming to a digital format, specifically Zoom. In May and June, we revised the structure and format for our 2020 Teacher Institute in order to avoid cancelling the program all together. Using Zoom, the center's staff and our colleague Charlie Flanagan, Director of Outreach at the National Archives' Center for Legislative Archives, conducted seven two-day digital teacher institutes, five during the summer months and one each in September and October. While not the same experience as the in-person institutes, the digital workshops, titled "Teaching About Congress and the Constitution in Critical Moments of U.S. History," were very well-received and appreciated by the teachers, many of which had far fewer opportunities to earn their required professional development credits for recertification this summer. Conducting the workshops digitally engendered some unanticipated benefits as well. The digital format provided greater flexibility for teachers who may not have been able to attend in the past because of scheduling conflicts or transportation-related difficulties. As a result, each workshop included a broader mix of teachers from around West Virginia than has been the norm in years past. We will conduct one last teacher institute in January 2021 to fulfill our obligations to reach 140 educators under the current West Virginia Humanities Council (WVHC) grant. In spite of the pandemic, we reached more teachers this year than any previous iteration of the Teacher Institute. The WVHC recently awarded us a fourth consecutive grant to support the Teacher Institute initiative in 2021, and we recently won a \$1,000 grant from the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation to support a Teacher Institute for Berkeley County teachers in 2021 as well. John Sedlins and other members of the grants subcommittee of our Friends of the Byrd Center Steering Committee led the effort in securing the community foundation grant. We plan next year's Teacher Institute to include both in-person and digital workshops for 150 teachers.

En toto, the Byrd Center conducted a comparable number of free public programs in 2020 as in years past. In a manner similar to our experience with the Teacher Institute, transitioning our public programs to a digital format enabled us to draw a broader audience. While per-event attendance remained on par with our historic programming averages, our attendance logs indicate many new attendees rsvp'd and participated in the digital programs. Dr. Sabrina Dent's Constitution Day lecture was particularly successful in this regard. Moving forward, the Byrd Center will look to conduct both in-person and digital programming.

The Covid-19 pandemic also forced a restructuring of the Byrd Center's annual summer internship program. With opportunities for on-site work in the Byrd Center's archives closed

off, we developed a framework for hosting four digital interns from Shepherd's public history program. The interns, Ally Wharton, Patrick Fuller, Victoria Myers, and Erik Minyard conducted research in the Byrd Center's digital collections, creating three blog essays each and numerous shorter pieces for use on our social media platforms. Archivist and Office Manager Jody Brumage met with the interns at the beginning and conclusion of each week via Zoom to provide guidance and monitor progress. The internships were funded by CEF board member Sue Kemnitzer's generous contribution and monies raised from the 2019 Friends of the Byrd Center event featuring Cokie and Steve Roberts.

Fundraising:

The public health crisis unfortunately prevented a third Friends of the Byrd Center summer fundraiser, but nonetheless, the Byrd Center made substantial fundraising strides in 2020. A gift from Board Member Sue Kemnitzer to support student internships jump-started the year even before the pandemic set in, and additional board member support arrived throughout the spring, continuing the forward momentum. With the Center closed to the public, Byrd Center staff worked collaboratively with the CEF board to engage former staffers and colleagues of Senator Byrd. These efforts culminated in a well-attended and received Zoom reunion for former staffers in June, the tenth anniversary of Senator Byrd's passing.

Byrd Center staff also collaborated with local CEF board members Lisa Welch, Sue Kemnitzer, and Ray Smock and Phyllis Smock, during the spring months to craft a fundraising presentation for Shepherdstown-area supporters. In May, we made our pitch to approximately thirty-five Friends of the Byrd Center members and potential members via a Zoom meeting. This meeting served as a catalyst for the formation of the Friends of the Byrd Center Steering Committee. Lisa Welch and Sandy Brown, a longtime Friends member, led this initiative in June and July, recruiting additional local supporters to aid Byrd Center staff in numerous areas, including marketing, program planning, grant identification and writing, and fundraising. Under the leadership of Marianne Alexander, the steering committee has provided enormous assistance to our staff since its formation. Moreover, Marianne has led the charge to raise \$200,000 for the Byrd Center by January 31, 2021. To this end, Marianne generously contributed a \$20,000 gift to the Byrd Center in July and shortly thereafter an additional anonymous gift of \$20,000 was received. Recently, Marianne announced an additional \$60,000 matching gift from a second anonymous donor. We are working with the steering committee to raise local awareness about this tremendous opportunity and increase giving to the Byrd Center during the end-of-the-year giving season.

In addition to the tremendous local support we received this year, we secured a forgivable Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan for near \$35,000 and a corresponding CARES Act grant from the West Virginia Humanities Council for \$10,000. The PPP loan was secured with tremendous help from Monica Lingenfelter at the Shepherd University Foundation. Combined, the two awards contributed approximately \$45,000 in revenues requiring no match or reimbursement to help cover Byrd Center operating expenses during the pandemic.

The Byrd Center's revenues for f.y. 2020 (\$132,894 as of the writing of this report) exceed our projected revenues by approximately \$100,000! This is a substantial achievement that ensures the Byrd Center has the funding necessary to maintain operations through f.y. 2021. However, the Byrd Center's viability as an ongoing entity beyond 2021 will be predicated on maintaining and expanding the current efforts to fundraise and develop several consistent and durable revenue streams. As in years past, our staff have dedicated substantial time and effort this year to these ends. In July we submitted a major grant application to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), which, if awarded, would provide funding over three years for the processing of the Robert H. and Alan B. Mollohan Congressional Papers Collections, housed in the center's archives. In October we began discussions with a prominent West Virginia foundation regarding funding for a Byrd Center-led statewide civics education initiative. These discussions were facilitated by Karen Rice, Director of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning at Shepherd and a member of the steering committee, and they have been extremely positive and encouraging.

In concluding, I want to reiterate my immense gratitude and appreciation for the amazing network of dedicated supporters who have worked very hard alongside the center's staff and board to face the challenges of the COVID-19 public health crises and to ensure a successful year for the Byrd Center.

Respectfully submitted,

James J. Wyatt
December 21, 2020



Campus and Community Engagement

Transitioning the 2020 Teacher Institute to a digital format paved the way for a similar evolution for our public programming. Byrd Center Archivist and Office Manager Jody Brumage led three programs early in the summer as we rolled-out the virtual format. Two of these programs focused on stories told through the archives, focusing on the 1960 and 1964 presidential elections and their consequences for West Virginia's congressional representatives. The third program, held in early July, offered Friends of the Byrd Center the opportunity to walk-through a Teacher Institute workshop, exploring the efforts to secure African American civil rights during the Reconstruction Era.

The Byrd Center has not traditionally conducted public programming in the summer months outside of the two recent Friends of the Byrd Center fundraisers in 2018 and 2019. However, as racial unrest gripped the nation in late spring and early summer and many local Shepherdstown supporters forewent summer travel, we responded to requests to develop and conduct a series of digital programs focusing on race and institutional racism in American history.

Beginning in July and extending into October, the Byrd Center conducted several programs with noted historians focusing on instances where Congress grappled with broader popular calls to advance civil rights. University of Tennessee Historian Michael Woods discussed the creation and use of the "Gag Rule" in Congress to thwart abolitionist efforts to end slavery in the mid-19th century in July. U.S. Senate Historian Betty Koed profiled Senator Charles Sumner and the Civil Rights Act of 1875, and Associate U.S. Senate Historian Kate Scott discussed the Senate's failure to pass anti-lynching legislation during the Great Depression/New Deal era in separate talks. Shepherd University Associate Professor of History Julia Sandy discussed how grassroots civil rights activists organized and supported the broader push for equal rights and legislative protections during the 1950s and 1960s. We have posted each of these programs to the Byrd Center's YouTube channel and a dedicated page on our website, which includes related programs from years past (<https://www.byrdcenter.org/of-by-and-for-all-people.html>).

Additional Byrd Center fall programs included the annual Tom E. Moses Memorial Lecture on the U.S. Constitution and evening programs with authors Mathew Algeo and Bradford Kane. Algeo discussed his recent book *All This Marvelous Potential*, which profiled Bobby Kennedy's 1968 tour of rural Kentucky, while Kane discussed his recent book *Pitchfork Populism: Ten Political Forces that Shaped and Election and Continue to Change America*. This year's

Constitution Day speaker, Dr. Sabrina Dent, incorporated discussions about race, historical racism, and the importance of maintaining the traditional separation of church and state into her address, titled “The Morality of Freedom: Reimagining the Promises of the U.S. Constitution.” Dr. Dent’s talk was dedicated to the late civil rights icon and Congressman, John R. Lewis, and can also be viewed on the Byrd Center’s YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPSq5ItQu8_s9nVt3SxTTiA).

During most semesters, the Byrd Center hosts students for tours of the archives where they are introduced to the archival profession and methodologies. Since gathering students in-person was not feasible this year, we moved this important function of the center to a virtual platform. Jody spoke with students in the Introduction to Historical Studies and Introduction to Public History classes where information about the Byrd Center’s archives and the collections we preserve was shared. Thanks to our collaboration with Dr. Jason Allen of Shepherd University’s Education Department (Allen volunteers with the Steering Committee), we also gained inroads to interact with education students. Jody spoke to the Social Studies Methods course this fall about the Byrd Center’s educational outreach and the development of our lesson plans.

The Byrd Center staff is working closely with our Friends of the Byrd Center Steering Committee to prepare virtual programs for the Spring 2021 calendar and will be sharing details soon!



Our Supporters

The Friends of the Byrd Center Steering Committee

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Benjamin Bankhurst
Effie Kallas
Carolyn Rodis

Barbara Shaffer
John Sedlins
Rachael Meads
Jason Allen

Sandy Brown
Karen Rice
Andy Ridenour
Juliet Umunnah

Lisa Welch
Cheryl Roberts
Jack Young
Jody Brumage

Senators (\$20,000+)

Anonymous
Anonymous
Marianne Alexander

Ambassadors (\$5,000+)

Susan Kemnitzer
Walter J. Stewart

Leaders (\$1,000+)

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