

GLENVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

# Pioneer Update

Glenville State University Newsletter for Alumni & Friends | July 2025

## Alumni SPOTLIGHT



AJ Howard '19 is currently working as a licensed physical therapist at Reynolds Memorial Hospital in Glen Dale, West



## Pioneer Football Schedule to Include Five Special Games

The Glenville State Football program will be doing a lot of traveling for their fall 2025 campaign. In addition to the six away games that are part of schedule, the Pioneers will also be on the road for the other five games due to construction taking place at Morris Stadium. All five football games that would have been played at home during the 2025 season will now be played at alternate sites in various communities around the area.

Virginia, a position he has held for the past two years.

During his time at Glenville State, AJ was a member of the Student Government Association, Chi Beta Phi, the Bio-Chemistry Club, and he served as a Resident Assistant at Pioneer Village. AJ was also a member of the Hidden Promise Scholars Program and earned the HPS Leadership Award for Exemplary Conduct. He completed a degree in Exercise Science with a minor in Biology.

After graduating from Glenville State, he went on to Wheeling University where he earned a Doctorate of Physical Therapy degree. AJ passed his boards in the spring of 2022 and worked for Holzer Health systems for a short time. He then moved to Wheeling and now works as a full-time inpatient and outpatient physical therapist.

In his spare time AJ enjoys fishing, hiking, fitness, community service, and being an active volunteer with HOBY youth leadership. He currently resides in Wheeling, West Virginia.

AJ's sister Kaylee Howard '18 is also a Glenville graduate.

When asked what Glenville State means to him, AJ said, "Glenville State College is a place that will always hold fond memories of friendship and an exemplary education. The professors treated me like family and helped develop the beginnings of my career path. The memories of people and good times will always mean the world to me and facilitated the person I am today."

We are pleased to feature AJ in this month's Alumni Spotlight and are proud to call him an alumnus.

The Pioneers will open the season **at Herbert Hoover High School in Elkview, West Virginia against Emory & Henry University on Saturday, August 30** before traveling to Lock Haven (Saturday, September 6) and Millersville (Saturday, September 13) in consecutive weeks.

After a bye week, Glenville State opens the conference slate **at Roane County High School in Spencer, West Virginia on Saturday, September 27 against back-to-back MEC Champions, the University of Charleston.** The Golden Eagles went (11-1, 9-0 MEC) in 2024, having their season ended by Ashland on a game-winning field goal in the first round of the NCAA DII Playoffs. Mike Tesch was promoted to head coach after former UC head coach Quinn Sanders left to take the Offensive Coordinator position at Northern Illinois.

**GSU will defend the Battle for the Bit trophy against Fairmont State the following week at Robert C. Byrd High School in Clarksburg, West Virginia on Saturday, October 4.** The Falcons finished the 2024 campaign (7-4, 6-3 MEC), winning five of their last six. The following week, the Pioneers are scheduled for a matchup with Frostburg State on Saturday, October 11. The Frostburg Bobcats had an unusual 2024 season, going (6-5, 4-5 MEC) after winning their first six games of the year and losing their remaining five games.

**On Saturday, October 18, the blue and white will meet Concord University for a matchup at Nicholas County High School in Summersville, West Virginia.** GSU has beaten Concord eight of the last nine times. CU had a rough 2024, finishing (1-10, 1-8 MEC) and eventually leading to new leadership in Athens with Cody Edwards taking over. **October 18 has been designated as the homecoming game for Glenville State.**

The Pioneers will head to West Liberty on Saturday, October 25 and West Virginia State on Saturday, November 1. The Pioneers beat both squads at home last year but fell on the road to them in 2023.

**Senior Day will be Saturday, November 8 against Wheeling University where the two teams will meet at Parkersburg South High School in Parkersburg, West Virginia.** This will be the sixth overall meeting since Wheeling started their program in 2019. GSU has won the last two matchups and will look to do the same in 2025. The regular season will come to an end at West Virginia Wesleyan with the two teams scheduled to meet on Saturday, November 15. The Pioneers have dominated this matchup, winning eight of the last nine, including the last six.

Glenville State is coming off of a (7-4, 7-2 MEC) 2024 season, finishing second in the Mountain East Conference, the highest finish in program history since the formation of the league in 2013.

Fans are encouraged to check the [GSU Athletics website](#) for schedule updates before making travel plans.

The Morris Family Health and Fitness Complex, which will be the new home for Pioneer football, women's soccer, and track and field, is slated to be complete by the summer of 2026.





*Dr. Rico Gazal (right) receives the 2025 Faculty Award of Excellence from President Manchin.*

## **Gazal Named 2025 Faculty Award of Excellence Recipient**

Glenville State University Professor of Forestry Dr. Rico Gazal has been named the 2025 Faculty Award of Excellence recipient. Gazal was recognized at the spring 2025 Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, May 10.

“Being selected for the Faculty Award of Excellence is incredibly humbling. It means a great deal because it reflects not just my work, but the trust and support of my colleagues and students,” Gazal said. “I’ve always believed that teaching is more than delivering lectures—it’s about mentorship, connection, and helping students discover what they’re capable of.”

Gazal earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry from the University of the Philippines Los Baños, and then completed graduate studies in Japan and at Mississippi State University. He came to Glenville State in 2005 and teaches courses in natural resource management, environmental science, and forestry.

“My journey has taken me across the globe, but West Virginia has become home. My wife and I are raising our daughter here, and she’s now starting her own college journey at the University of Southern California,” Gazal added.

Outside of his classroom obligations, Gazal serves as the Academic Coordinator for the Global WV Consortium and coordinates study-abroad opportunities and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) projects. Gazal says that he is passionate about giving students the chance to see the world through education. “Through our international partnerships and virtual exchange programs, they’re able to explore science, the environment, and different cultures in ways they might never have imagined. I’m proud to be part of Glenville State University that supports both tradition and innovation,” he said.

He has also served a stint as Chair of the Department of Land Resources, has helped secure grants for his department, and has been a member of campus committees related to curriculum, academic



appeals, international education, and student research.

"I love the sense of community here. Glenville State feels like family. I get to know my students not just in the classroom, but through fieldwork and travel. Seeing them grow in confidence and find their path is one of the most rewarding parts of teaching," Gazal said.

Each spring, the campus community is invited to nominate an outstanding faculty member for this award. Faculty Award of Excellence recipients must be full-time and have taught at Glenville State for at least two years to be eligible. Names of the honorees are displayed on a permanent plaque in the Heflin Administration Building.

## Annual Glenville State Night at GoMart Park Held

A rainy start couldn't dampen spirits for Glenville State Night at GoMart Park in Charleston, WV last month. A quick downpour got the evening off to a wet start, but alumni and friends were soon able to put their umbrellas away as skies cleared just in time for GSU President Dr. Mark Manchin to throw out the ceremonial first pitch on behalf of Glenville State.



Special thanks to everyone who joined us on the GoMart Park Party Deck for an evening of baseball and Pioneer camaraderie!



*The WV State Folk Festival square dancing platform was already starting to fill with dancers on the evening of Friday, June 20.*

# WV State Folk Festival Celebrates Diamond Jubilee in Glenville

The West Virginia State Folk Festival celebrated its 75th anniversary last month.

Glenville State has been connected with the Folk Festival since its inception back in 1950 and that connection has continued over the years. These days, several members of the campus community contribute to the success of the Festival and the campus and its facilities host some of the events and activities.

The Festival Belles and their companions spend the weekend residing on the Glenville State campus. The Belles are the charming county ambassadors from throughout the Mountain State who must be at least 70 years old, reside in West Virginia, and possess the pioneering spirit that characterizes mountain heritage.

The Folk Festival Belles for 2025 included: Judy Bolen (Barbour County), Dawn A. Fox (Calhoun County), Carolyn White (Clay County), Barbara Nicholson (Doddridge County), Bobbi Moss (Gilmer County), Patty Dent Adkins '63 (Grant County), Ladonna M. Tucker (Harrison County), Linda Mahan (Jackson County), Linda Rhodes (Kanawha County), Maxine Cole Rastle '58 (Lewis County), Janet Mundell (Marion County), Carol Newberry (Mason County), Shirley Bland (Mineral County), Joyce Smyth (Monongalia County), Dottie O'Toole (Morgan County), Linda P. Shomo (Randolph County), Patty Pennell (Ritchie County), Sherry Wright (Tucker County), Lynn A. Frum (Upshur County), Helen L. (Buck) Hill '88 (Wirt County), and Myrtle Deems (Wood County).

This year's Folk Festival included all the usual fun that has come to be expected. Events included square dancing, folk music and singing, storytelling, a spelling bee, lumberjack competition, pet show, quilt show, antique car show, fiddle and banjo contests, horse drawn wagon rides, and much more. Craft and food vendors were also setup all around Downtown Glenville during the Festival.

The WV State Folk Festival officers include President Dr. David O'Dell (Professor of Chemistry at GSU), Brenda (Barton) McCartney '76 (retired GSC Registrar), Secretary Lynn Welch, Treasurer Sandy (Moyers) Pettit '85, and Historian Jason Gum '05 (RFK Library Director). WVSFF board members include Ginny Hawker '91, Carol (Reed) Wolfe '78, Doug Cottrill, Ted Yurkiewicz, and Tony Minney '08.

[Click here](#) to see more about the 75th anniversary.





*Attendees of the Women's Leadership Circle graze box class.*

## WLC-Sponsored Graze Box Class Held

The Glenville State University Women's Leadership Circle hosted a sold-out Graze Box class last month with 25 attendees. The Foodie Momma, Jodi Steadman, led the group in how to prepare and "dress-up" a charcuterie snack box. Those in attendance were able to enjoy the evening socializing with friends while enjoying light refreshments and creating their own graze box to take home. One of the ladies in attendance had this to say about the event, "This was a really nice opportunity to build relationships with coworkers while doing something extra fun. It doesn't hurt that the food was delicious AND there was a great take-home package as well."

The Women's Leadership Circle will be kicking off the new year starting July 1. An annual membership is \$100 and provides you with early notices and discounts for events. A portion of your fee also goes to support the WLC Scholarship. This past year, the WLC was able to award three young ladies with scholarships totaling \$2,500.

If you are interested in becoming a member or to find out more about the Women's Leadership Circle, visit our website or reach out to Vada Woodford via [email](#) or by phone at (304) 462-6382.

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## Next Pioneer Progress in the Works

Our editorial team is hard at work on the next issue of the *Pioneer Progress* magazine for Glenville State alumni and friends!

If you or your company are interested in supporting the *Pioneer Progress* with a monetary donation or advertising in the next issue, contact [Vada.Woodford@glennville.edu](mailto:Vada.Woodford@glennville.edu) for more information.



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, July 11 - GSU Volleyball Youth Camp (3rd - 6th grade)

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM - Waco Center

[Click here to sign up](#)



**Saturday, July 12 - GSU Volleyball Elite Prospect Camp** (9th - 12th grade)

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM - Waco Center

[Click here to sign up](#)

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**Saturday, July 19 - Mountain Fury Reunion Concert**

7:00 PM - Fine Arts Center Auditorium

*Featuring original members Rebekah (Long) Speer '08, Rachel (Singleton) Burge '08, and Eileen (Marsh) Metheney '08, with special guests Richie Jones '16 (banjo) and Robert Russell (fiddle).*

Tickets \$15

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**Wednesday, August 13, 2025 - GSU Night at Lambert's Winery**

5:00 PM - Lambert's Winery (Weston, WV)

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**Saturday, August 23 - Pioneer Athletics Elimination Dinner**

5:00-8:00 PM - Fatboy's BBQ Restaurant (27 Development Drive, Glenville, WV)

Tickets \$30 - Call (304) 462-6220 to purchase

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**Sunday, September 14 - Cody Mullens Memorial Golf Scramble**

9:00 AM - Glenville Golf Club

\$75 per person - Call (304) 377-7460 to sign up



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