

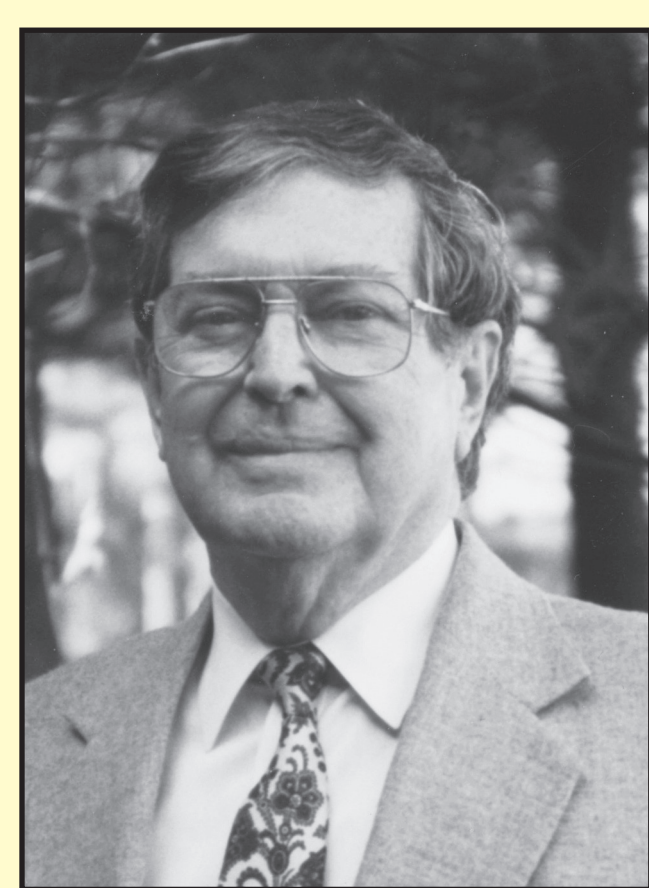
# 2021 J. Roy Houston Conservation Partnership Award

# The Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce



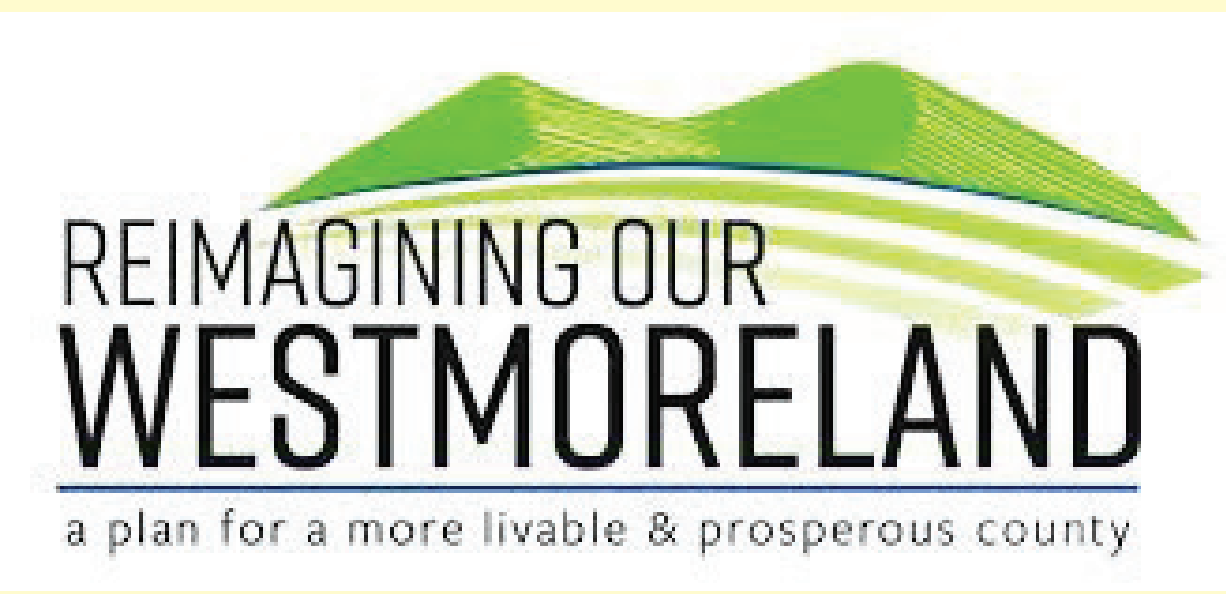
The Westmoreland Conservation District and the Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce can trace their partnership back at least 45 years, to 1976, the year when J. Roy Houston served as the chair of both organizations.

Where some might see incongruity in these dual roles, Roy saw unique opportunity; a chance for business and conservation to get to know each other better, uncover common goals and work together to achieve them. Roy’s instincts were good and to this day that relationship – which more often than not is adversarial in other counties – continues to be a positive one here in Westmoreland, resulting in many important projects that benefit our community.



J. Roy Houston

One of the most recent joint projects was the development of “Reimagining Our Westmoreland,” the county’s current comprehensive plan. The Chamber and the District both were active and equal partners in the development of this plan, and their two perspectives helped to create a well-balanced blueprint for a more livable and prosperous community.



For the past four years, younger members of the District’s technical staff have participated in the Chamber’s Leadership Westmoreland program, a nine-month learning experience where they were introduced to leaders in key elements of our community, including businesses, health care providers, social service agencies, government organizations, educational institutions, and so on. In addition to building better community awareness, the program helped participants develop leadership skills and



Standing outside the Chamber’s Greensburg headquarters recently are: (l-r) Executive Director Dan DeBone, President & CEO Chad Amond, and Member of the Board of Directors Jason Rigone.

the ability to find real-world solutions to community problems.

More recently, the Chamber’s Leadership Westmoreland Youth Academy (a similar leadership program designed for high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors) also partnered with the District. Last year, Leadership Westmoreland Youth Academy participants were able to participate in an outdoor conservation learning experience that the District provided along Turtle Creek. And our barn headquarters served as the host location for the entire one-week course this year.

Throughout the years, the Chamber’s annual prayer breakfast has been one of the signature Westmoreland County events that brings together leaders from all aspects of the community and all faiths. The District’s Board of Directors and leadership staff have attended faithfully for years, and have benefitted both personally and professionally from its encouraging message of partnership and unity.

With roughly 1,000 members and an across-the-county reach, the Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce has been instrumental in helping the District to promote its conservation ethic with nontraditional audiences, to form new and lasting partnerships, and to promote the use of more conservation best-management practices.

