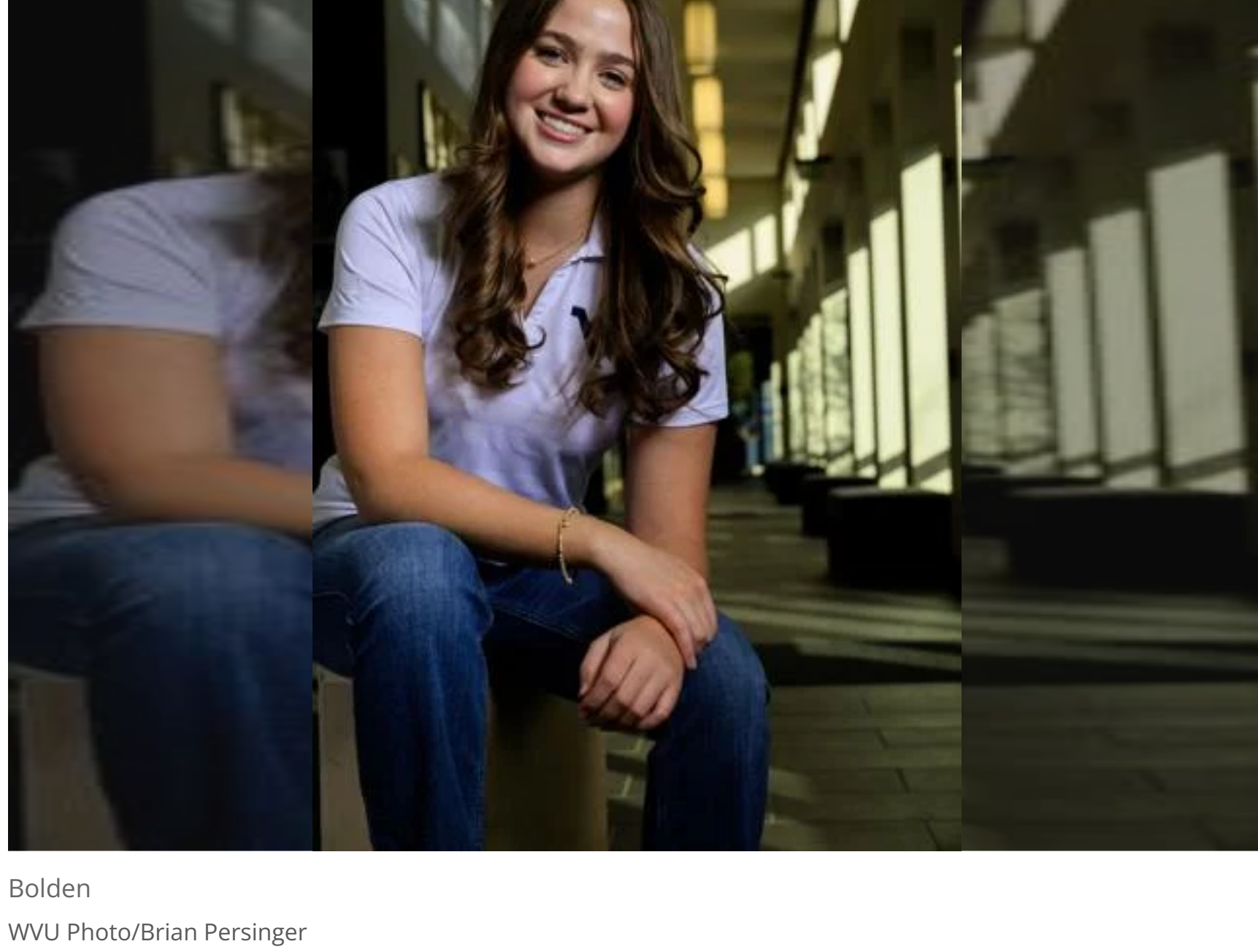


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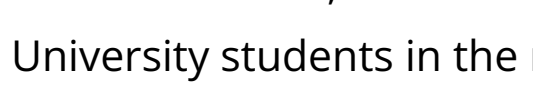
Bolden one of four finalists to become WVU Mountaineer mascot

From Staff Reports Feb 17, 2026 2 min to read



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MORGANTOWN, W.Va. — Amelia Bolden of Oakland is one of four West Virginia University students in the running to become the 72nd Mountaineer mascot.

Selected by a committee of faculty, staff and students based on an essay and interview, the finalists will be judged on their performances and interactions with the crowd as they lead traditional game cheers. The were set to wear buckskins and a cowskin cap while carrying a rifle to compete in a cheer-off during a men's basketball game (Feb. 18) in the Hope Coliseum.

Bolden is a first-year communication sciences and disorders junior with a minor in child development and family studies. She is a member of the community service team with the Mountaineer Maniacs, where she has volunteered her time to local cleanup events and the Halloween Trunk-or-Treat at the Hope Coliseum. She is also a member of the Country Line Dancing Club and the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association. Additionally, Bolden logged nearly 500 service-learning hours throughout high school.

"I've dreamed of being the Mountaineer forever, and I want to be able to show kids that if they can dream it, they can do it, no matter who they are or where they're from — don't let anyone ever tell you 'no,'" Bolden said. "As the Mountaineer, I want to represent West Virginia with pride, passion and responsibility."

The other 2026-27 Mountaineer mascot finalists are:

Reese Allen, a 2022 Bucklew Scholar, Eberly Scholar and member of the Honors College from Bridgeport, is a senior dual mechanical engineering and data science major. He has served as a Presidential Student Ambassador and is the founding president of the Microgravity Research Club in the WVU Benjamin M. Statler College of Engineering and Mineral Resources, where he leads STEM outreach activities for K-12 students. Allen has also supported the University community through more than 150 service hours at The Rack: WVU Student Food Pantry.

"The song 'Take Me Home, Country Roads' — everybody knows it by heart. People everywhere sing about West Virginia, but few of them know our state's stories and heritage," Allen said. "Being the Mountaineer mascot is my chance to share our experience, and to really give them a sense of 'country roads' and what it means to call West Virginia home."

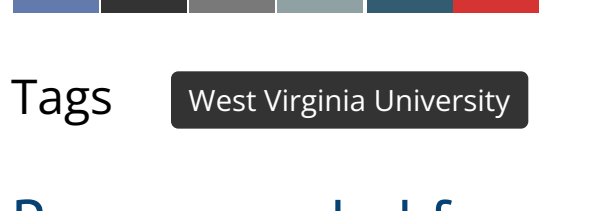
Tanner Figgatt, a member of the Honors College from Fraziers Bottom, is a freshman dual mechanical engineering and aerospace engineering major. He is a trumpet player in "The Pride of West Virginia," the Mountaineer Marching Band, and a student worker in the Lane Innovation Hub. He also serves as a member of the WVU Experimental Rocketry Club and CRU, the Christian campus ministry. Driven by an entrepreneurial spirit, he has managed his own leaf and lawn care business since 2019.

"No matter where you come from in the state, it can be the smallest town in the state, or it can be the largest city, everybody is wearing something for West Virginia University," Figgatt said. "As the Mountaineer, I will get to represent all of those people, people of different backgrounds, including the average guy."

Joel Hershman, from Buckhannon, is a junior dual sport, exercise and performance psychology and mental health and addiction studies major in the WVU College of Applied Human Sciences. He serves as a New Student Orientation Leader with Undergraduate Admissions and Tour Leader with the Visitors Center. He is also the social chair of the Sport and Exercise Psychology Club, director of Olympic sports for the Mountaineer Maniacs Executive Board and a member of the WVU Men's Rugby Club. His service initiatives include local cleanup events and flood recovery efforts in Marion County.

"As the Mountaineer mascot, I want to bring Braden Adkins' positivity and personality, and I want to bring Cade Kincaid's hype and ability to get the crowd behind him," Hershman said. "If I could mix those two together, that would be my perfect Mountaineer mascot, and that's who I want to be."

The selection committee will announce the winner during the WVU men's basketball game vs. BYU on Feb. 28. Tipoff is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. at the Hope Coliseum.



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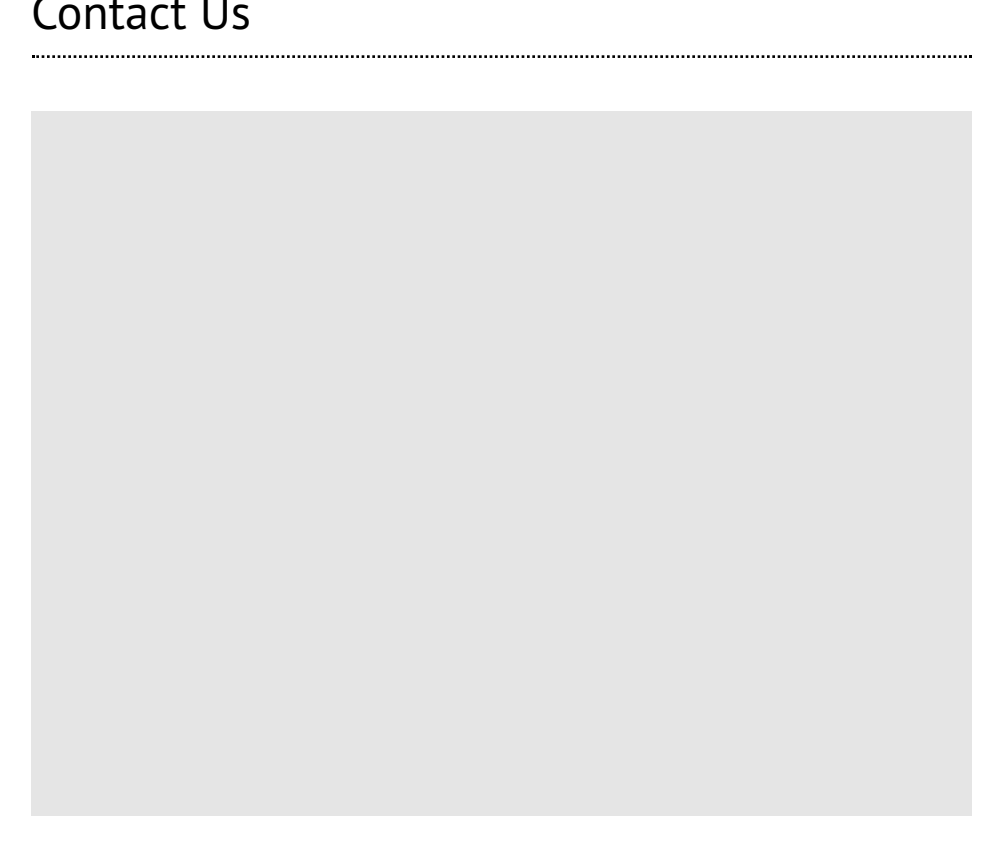
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