

## 71st Mountaineer Cade Kincaid ready to pass the buckskin as WVU selects Its 72nd mascot; Bridgeport native among finalists

by Jake Stiles STAFF WRITER Feb 18, 2026 2 min to read



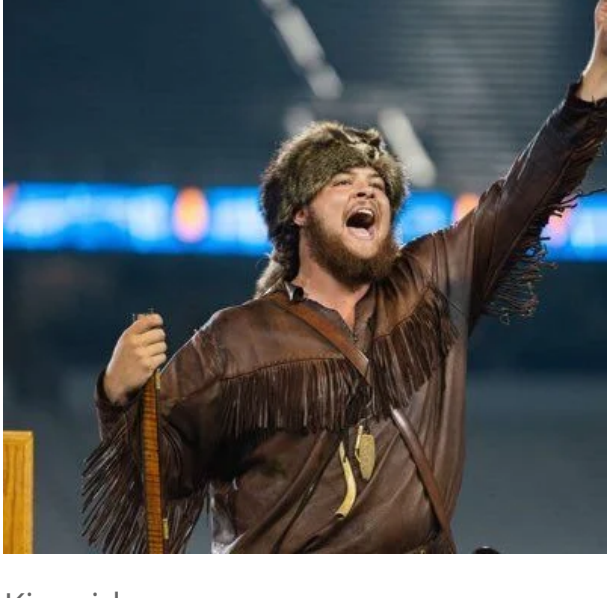
Braden Adkins, the 70th mountaineer, storms the football field in true Mountaineer tradition. Submitted by WVU

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BRIDGEPORT, W.Va. — Cade Kincaid, the 71st Mountaineer mascot at West Virginia University, is preparing to retire his buckskins and pass the honor to the next student to represent the university.

Kincaid, who first tried out for the role two years ago, described a selection process that is as rigorous as it is rewarding.



Kincaid



"There's a three-step process. You apply online. That's open to every student. Then they narrow down all the applications to interviews. And from the interviews, there's the final four. They do kind of an audition, but we call it a cheer-off," Kincaid said.

During the cheer-off, candidates play the role of Mountaineer mascot at a WVU basketball game while being evaluated by the selection committee.

"You're actually dressing up in an old pair of buckskins. We get one of our former Mountaineers to let these candidates wear them," Kincaid said.

"Then they put them on for half of a basketball game, walk up and down all the stairs of the Coliseum, interact with fans and do all the stuff while they're being graded," Kincaid explained.



Mountaineer Mascot Finalists, Tanner Figgatt (left sitting), Freshman Dual Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Major from Frazier, Wv, Joel Hershman (left standing), Junior Dual Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology and Mental Health Addiction. Submitted

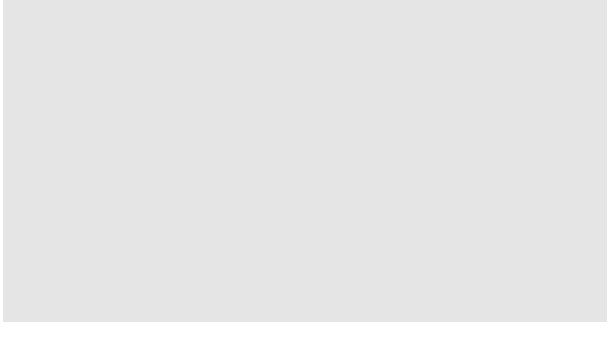
The current candidates for the 72nd Mountaineer include Tanner Figgatt, Joel Hershman, Amelia Bolden and Reese Allen of Bridgeport. They all competed in the cheer-off Wednesday evening to showcase their crowd-energizing abilities.

While this demonstration is an important part of the evaluation, Sarah Mosinski, chair of the Mountaineer Selection Committee, said other factors such as engagement with fans and technical skills also matter.

"The biggest thing is really their general impression. Are they engaging with people in the crowd? Do they start chants and cheers? Do they spend time having one-on-one conversations with fans around the stadium? Those kinds of things," Mosinski said.

"And then there are small technical things too, like making sure they handle the rifle properly and represent the university in a positive manner."

Allen, a senior dual mechanical engineering and data science major, is a 2022 Bucklew Scholar, Eberly Scholar and member of the Honors College. 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 contributed more than 150 service hours at The Rack: WVU Student Food Pantry.



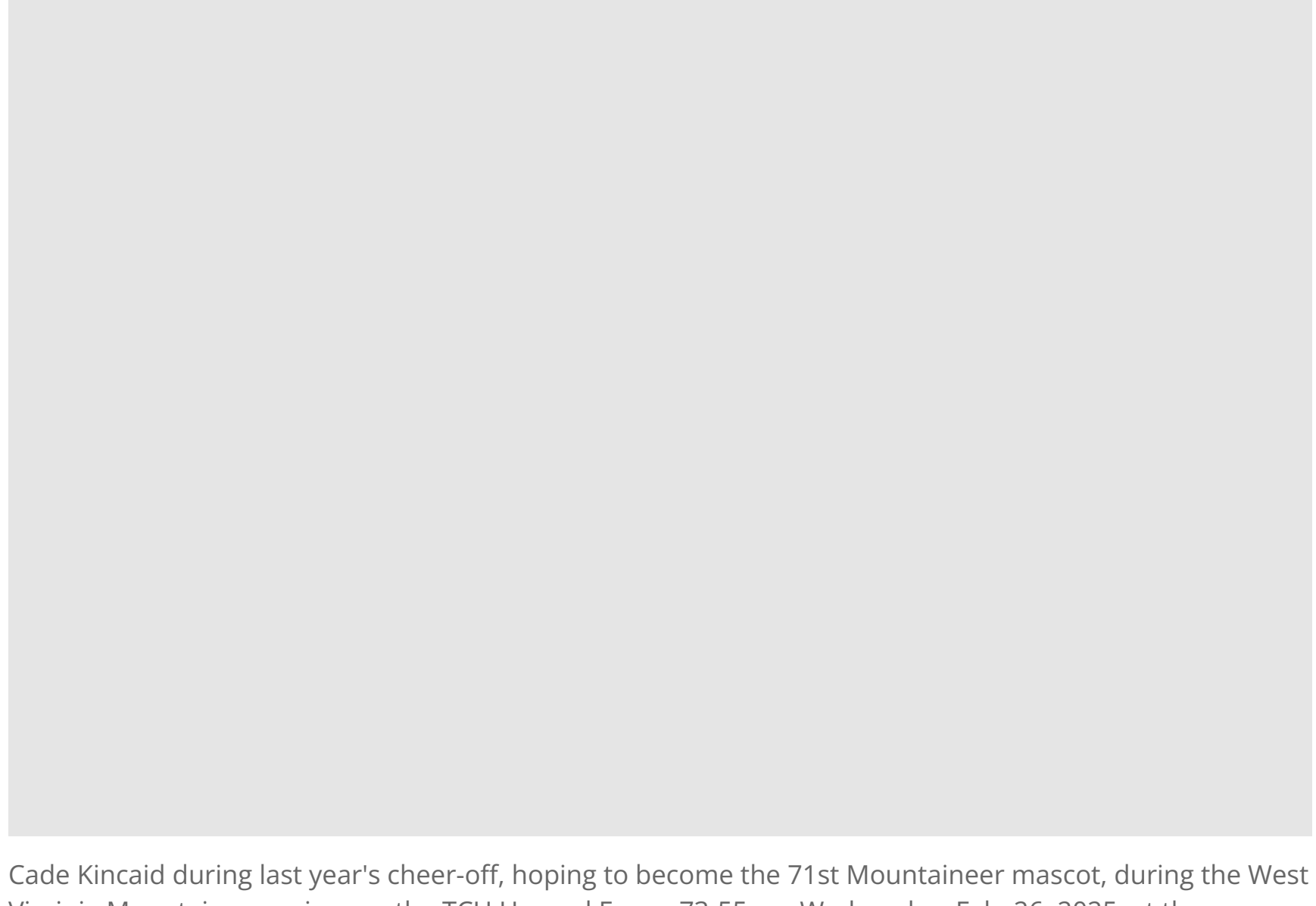
Allen

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

For Kincaid, the role of Mountaineer mascot was the culmination of persistence. Encouraged by a family member to try out while growing a beard, he did not win the first time but was motivated to reapply.

"Losing is really what pushed me to realize it's something I really wanted to pursue. It gave me a good reason and background to pursue it. I get to be the face of the message I believe in and the state I believe in," he said.

As he nears the end of his tenure, Kincaid said he is ready to hand over the mantle while also focusing on finishing his studies.



Cade Kincaid during last year's cheer-off, hoping to become the 71st Mountaineer mascot, during the West Virginia Mountaineers win over the TCU Horned Frogs, 73-55, on Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2025, at the Coliseum, in Morgantown, W.Va. Matt Sunday

"I'm finished with all my studies here in May, so I'm ready to get it moving. I'm from Fayetteville, West Virginia. I'm ready to move back home and go to work," he said. "I'm at 19 credit hours right now, so that's probably also a little bit of recency bias about my feelings toward school."

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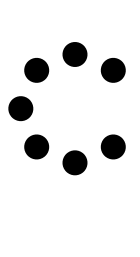
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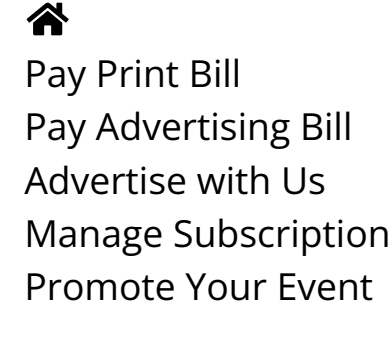


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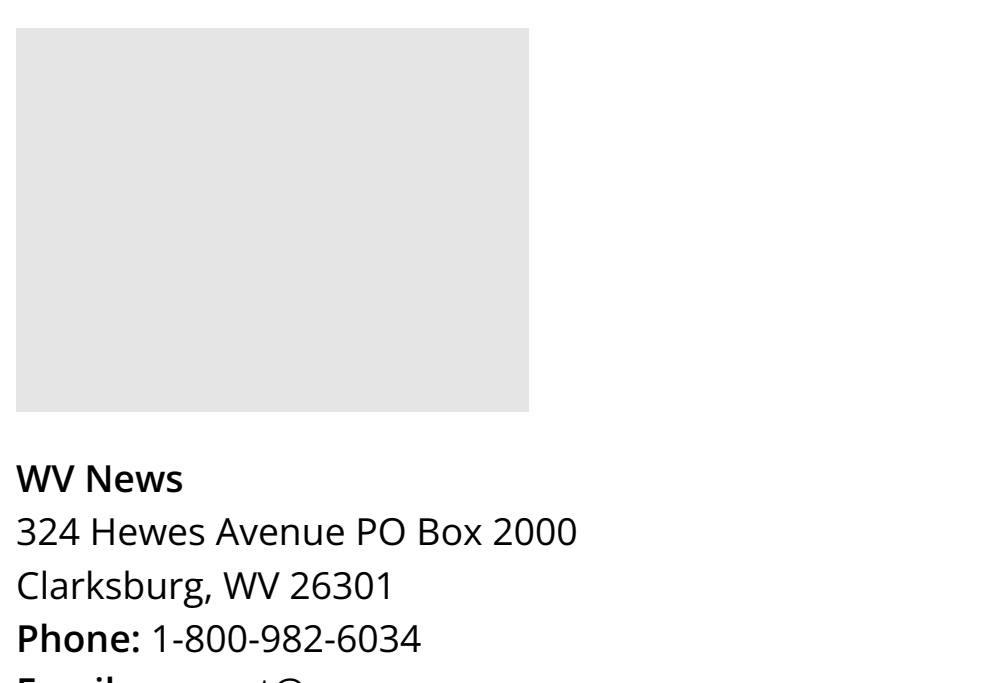


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