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## WVU President speaks at 57th annual Kootaga District Leadership Dinner

**LOCAL NEWS**  
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President of West Virginia University Dr. Michael Benson speaks to an audience during the 57th annual Kootaga District Buckskin Council Leadership Celebration Dinner. The event was held Tuesday evening at the Parkersburg Country Club. (Photo by Amber Phipps)

VIENNA – The Kootaga District Buckskin Council held its 57th annual Leadership Celebration Dinner at the Parkersburg Country Club on Tuesday.

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Scouts, local leaders and officials with Kootaga gathered for the district’s largest fundraising event and to hear guest speaker President of West Virginia University Dr. Michael Benson.

Benson said scouting has been part of his family for many generations. Benson earned his Eagle Scout when he was a teenager and said he was honored to be invited to the dinner.

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“It started with my family, all the way back to my grandfather, who was an assistant scoutmaster,” said Benson. “The value that scouting instills in young people I think are so worthwhile.”

Benson said the skills he learned in scouts he continues to utilize throughout his day-to-day life and in his role as WVU president.

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“I’m really grateful for all the leaders that share their time with this activity,” he said. “Those lessons can be portable, they’re transferable and can be applied to just about anything in life.”

Benson spoke during the dinner about the history of the scouts, the skills he learned as a scout, and how he applied it in his current position.

Truist Bank Marketing President Shawn Taylor organized the dinner and fundraising and said the district was aiming to raise \$88,000.

Taylor said they raised around \$66,000 and they’re close to their goal. The money goes towards the boys and girls in the scouts to provide them with the skills needed to better their experience.

“We have a great time and everyone has done a really nice job,” said Taylor. He said his job on the board is to ensure calls are being made and everything for the dinner is organized.

Taylor said he runs meetings and conducts check-ins for the district.

Benson said he was excited to be in Parkersburg and he loves seeing the beauty of the state.

“It’s great to be back,” he said.

The dinner brought together local organizations to recognize their donations and efforts made for the scouts.

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