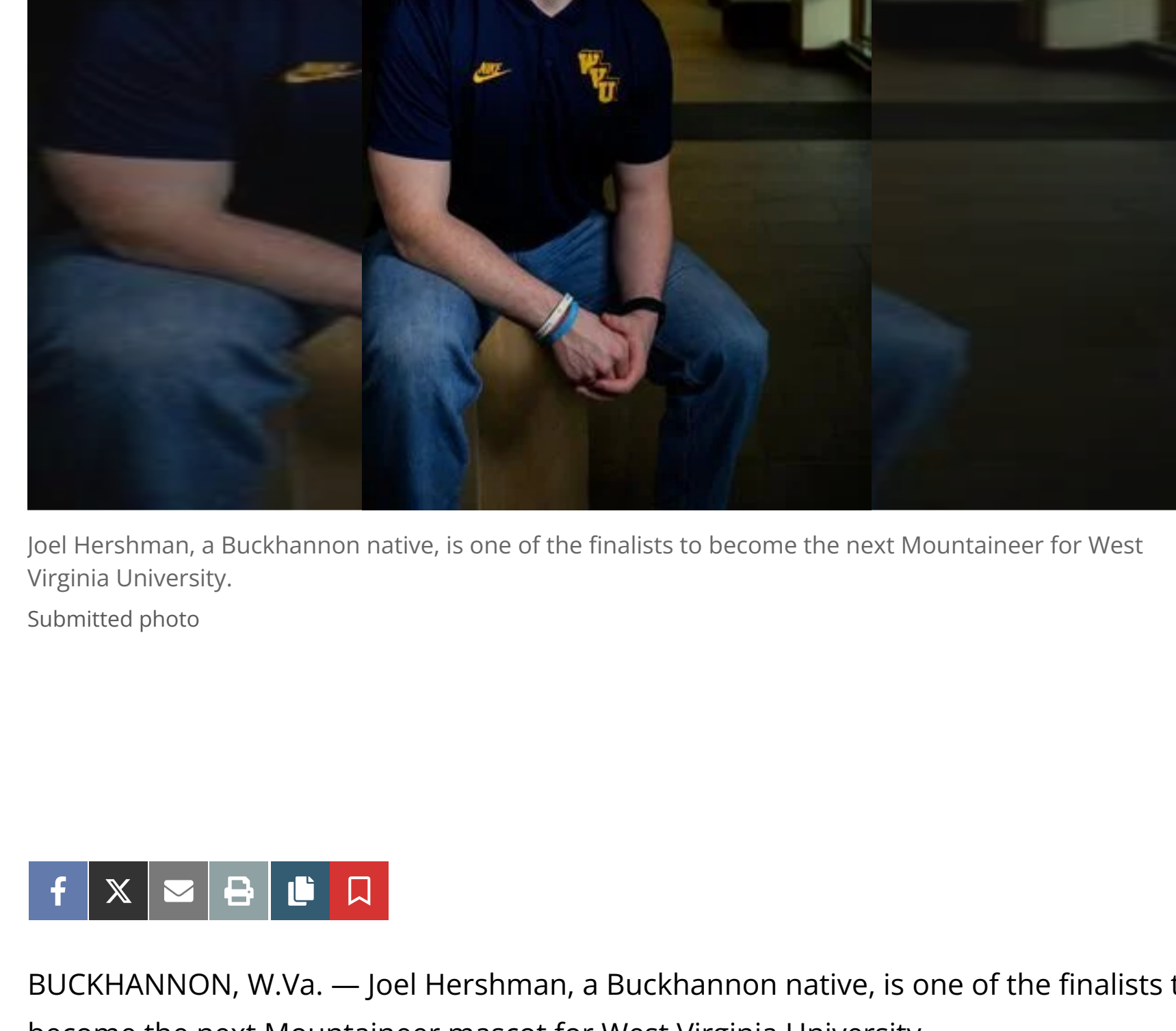


Buckhannon native Joel Hershman competes to become next Mountaineer mascot

by Noah Jeffries STAFF WRITER Feb 19, 2026 1 min to read

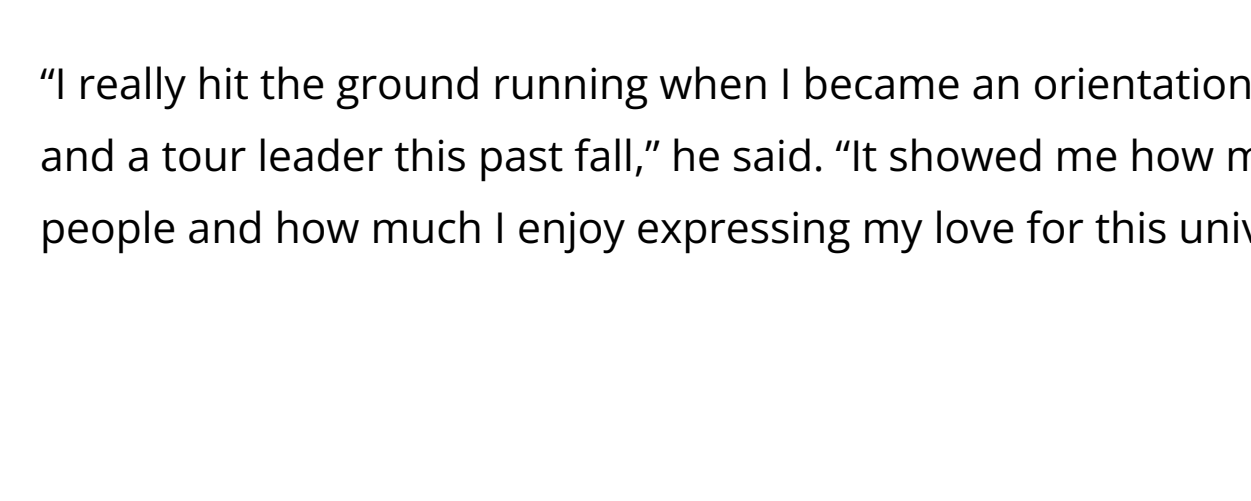


Joel Hershman, a Buckhannon native, is one of the finalists to become the next Mountaineer for West Virginia University. Submitted photo

BUCKHANNON, W.Va. — Joel Hershman, a Buckhannon native, is one of the finalists to become the next Mountaineer mascot for West Virginia University.

Hershman is a dual major at WVU, studying sports, exercise and performance psychology and mental health and addiction studies, with a minor in psychology.

During his time at the university, Hershman said he has continued to fall in love with the campus and community — a passion he hopes to convey if selected to serve as the mascot.



"I have a love and passion for this university and this state," he said. "A really big driving factor was all the people around me telling me I would be great at it. It's always been in the back of my mind since my freshman year. Every year I've been here, my love for this place has grown deeper."

Hershman already has experience representing the university through campus leadership roles, he said.

"I really hit the ground running when I became an orientation leader over the summer and a tour leader this past fall," he said. "It showed me how much I enjoy talking to people and how much I enjoy expressing my love for this university."

Since childhood, Hershman said he has always known he wanted to attend WVU.

"I have a giant WVU logo painted on my childhood bedroom wall and it's been there as long as I can remember," he said. "WVU is the only college I applied to and I didn't even go on a tour here. That's how much of a no-brainer it was for me."

Along with being a conduit for crowd energy during games, Hershman said he would also like to promote mental health if he takes up the mantle of Mountaineer.

"Something I want to do that I feel is unique from past mountaineers is being a really big advocate for mental health," he said. "I want to use this platform to bring awareness to it. I believe every person should be healthy physically, emotionally and mentally."

The platform provides a unique opportunity to reach demographics that might otherwise avoid the subject, Hershman said.

"I know especially with young men it can be hard to talk about those things," Hershman said. "If I can be a positive light for that and let them know it's important to talk about these things, I would love that."

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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