

News Release

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HIGHMARK WV PLEDGES FUNDING FOR NEW PARKERSBURG COMMUNITY GARDEN

A groundbreaking ceremony will be held at Point Park Marketplace

Wednesday, July 9 at 11 a.m.

Parkersburg residents will soon have a multi-purpose community garden at Point Park Marketplace thanks to the city of Parkersburg, Downtown PKB, the Wood County Development Authority, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield West Virginia, which has pledged to fund the project. The city will handle construction.

The purpose of the project is to provide a park-like atmosphere for people to work together, build community bonds, provide educational opportunities and grow fresh produce for participants, schools and local food banks.

The garden will include 49 raised-bed plots – including five handicap-accessible beds. The garden will also include a fountain, sidewalks and 16-by-20 greenhouse to be used for educational projects. The greenhouse will be funded by a grant from the Highmark Foundation. The garden will be available for use for fall crops later this year and there is also plenty of room for future expansion, organizers say.

“At Highmark West Virginia, our efforts to become a more sustainable company align with our corporate vision and values to improve the health of our customers and to improve the health of the communities we serve,” said Fred Earley, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield West Virginia president. “By funding this community garden, we are not only continuing our support for an enhanced and well-rounded experience in downtown Parkersburg, but are also providing a means for the members of our community to build better skills for healthy living. We’re proud to be a part of it.”

“We want private citizens and private industry to get into agriculture and learn the trade, then move agriculture to a whole new level that West Virginia has never seen before,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick. “We import \$7.3 billion worth of food into West Virginia and we only grow a half-billion. We have a tremendous opportunity to make up that difference. This is a great step in that direction and we appreciate Mayor Newell’s leadership on this project.”

For more information, contact Jarrod Dean, WVDA Project Coordinator, 304-558-3200 or 304-633-6814.