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**CONTACT:** Ken Bays at 304-793-6845  
kbays@osteo.wvsom.edu  
Marketing & Communications Office

**Clingman Center ceremony emphasizes importance of giving back**

**LEWISBURG, W.Va.** – Like the woman whose name it bears, the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine’s (WVSOM) Clingman Center for Community Engagement recognizes the importance of giving back to the community. The value of serving others was a recurring theme of those who spoke at the school’s Oct. 29 ribbon-cutting ceremony for its new facility.

The Clingman Center, located in Lewisburg’s Montwell Commons, will serve as a bridge between WVSOM and the surrounding area, allowing the school to deliver programs that teach community members skills to help them manage healthier lives. It’s named for the late Gwen Clingman, who for many years provided meals to WVSOM students, faculty and administrators at her downtown Lewisburg business, Clingman’s Market.

The Clingman Center is currently used for community workshops and trainings and will provide further options for community engagement and healthy activities as its infrastructure develops. A commercial teaching kitchen has been constructed in the building to offer culinary training and outreach on healthy cooking, and the site also will be used for workforce development programs and community-based health research.

Bob Foster, D.O., WVSOM’s associate dean for osteopathic medical education, served as master of ceremonies at the ribbon cutting. Clingman’s daughters, Alice Hollingsworth and Sharon Clingman Shutzer, and a granddaughter, Heather Hollandsworth, spoke at the ceremony. Other family members were also present.

Hollingsworth said her mother loved WVSOM and the thousands of students she fed.

“Our mother used to say that there’s no use passing this way if you don’t help people,” she said. “She would say that the osteopathic school was born in her little store. Mother knew that the vision Roland [Sharp, WVSOM’s first president and Clingman’s cousin] and other doctors discussed over lunch was to educate men and women to be the best physicians they could be, serving in rural communities while being compassionate and caring for all people.”



## West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine

West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice, who attended the ceremony with First Lady Cathy Justice, spoke about the school's history in Lewisburg and commended WVSOM for its significance to medical education and to West Virginia's rural population.

"This school is essential not just to Lewisburg and Greenbrier County but to our state, to our nation and to the world," Justice said. "You're pumping doctor after doctor into our rural areas. I celebrate all that you're doing."

Others who spoke at the ceremony included Florian Schleiff of the Greenbrier Valley Restoration Project, from whom WVSOM is leasing the building that houses the center; James W. Nemitz, Ph.D., the school's president; and Heather Antolini, WVSOM's director of institutional development.

Nemitz said the Clingman Center is an example of WVSOM's commitment to meeting the health care needs of West Virginians. He highlighted the fact that the center's programs will address nutrition, chronic disease management and addiction recovery, among other community health concerns.

"Many West Virginians are dying of chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart problems, so we're going to teach people to eat right. We're also going to bring people who are in recovery because of the opioid epidemic here to learn skills so that they can be contributing members of society," he said. "We're going to teach people how to live better and healthier lives."

Nemitz said he thinks the Clingman Center could become a model for other, similar community facilities statewide.

"I believe this will be the start of something even bigger," he said. "We're going to collect data to see which programs work, and then we're going to share it with others and encourage other communities to create centers like this around the state so that we can improve the quality of life for all West Virginians."

After the ceremony, attendees were invited to take home flower arrangements used as décor at the event in exchange for a donation to the WVSOM Gwen Clingman Memorial Scholarship Fund, which is presented annually to a student who has demonstrated a commitment to community service throughout his or her time in medical school.

Lewisburg Mayor Beverly White and West Virginia Delegate Jeff Campbell were also present at the ceremony, as were West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute Director Sally Hodder, M.D., West Virginia University Office of Health Services Research Director Adam Baus, Ph.D., and U.S. Department of Agriculture Business and Cooperative Programs and Rural Development Director Lisa Sharp.



## West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine

The Clingman Center is also available to the public as a rental space for events such as meetings, weddings, receptions and private parties through the WVSOM Foundation. Those interested in renting the facility may contact the foundation at 304-793-6852.

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*WVSOM is a national leader in educating osteopathic physicians for primary care medicine in rural areas. Visit WVSOM online at [www.wvsom.edu](http://www.wvsom.edu).*