



Bluefield State College

ISO Tours Nuclear Bunker at Greenbrier Resort Hotel and Observes Christmas Lighting & Sing-Along

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 5, 2016

It was an outing which caused participants to reflect simultaneously on the possibility of a worldwide nuclear conflagration while likewise observing the peaceful tranquility emanating from a sea of candle lights as joyful singing arose from the gathered congregation. Horror and calm tied together like an attractive ribbon on a Pandora's box of possibilities. Indeed, the dual experience was a perfect metaphor for the context inhabitants of the planet Earth find themselves in as the 21st century unfolds.

The BSC International Student Organization (ISO) started planning this excursion back in August upon the suggestion of Office of International Initiatives Coordinator (OII) Professor Sudhakar Jamkhandi who felt that BSC's international students might appreciate the brilliant display of Christmas lights which is a regular annual practice of the Greenbrier and demonstrative to many of the faithful of the promise of a savior who would lay out a path to peace.

Secretly constructed in the late 1950s and becoming operational in 1962, just in time for the Cuban Missile Crisis, the bunker served as an emergency nuclear fallout shelter for the 535 members of the U.S. Congress, while each member was allowed to bring along one aide to share the 60-day supply of food until, as the plan went, it was safe enough to emerge from underground and restore some semblance of government. Exposed by a *Washington Post* reporter in 1992, the bunker opened as a tourist attraction in 1995, as a reminder of the Cold War mentality that once gripped the nation's psyche.


Hiding in plain sight below the West Virginia Wing of the resort, our bunker tour guide, Mr. Frank Houghton, stated that guests were largely unaware of what lay beneath them. Today, the nuclear bunker is managed by Ms. Linda Walls, and the 90-minute tours can run \$34/person or half-price for groups of 20 or more. It is worth visiting at least once in one's life, while others may want to pursue further study into what remains hidden in secret America. As one member of our group remarked: "I enjoyed it [i.e. the bunker tour] immensely. I especially enjoyed learning how the government secretly organized and implemented their plan/idea into fruition – unbelievable and amazing! An excellent lesson to be learned – if one has an idea it can be done with a plan, determination and perseverance – the sky is not always the limit – one can go beyond!"

Following our hour and one-half tour, ISO members and supporting BSC faculty, staff, administrators, and community members enjoyed a refreshing dinner at nearby Cooks Country Kitchen Restaurant right down the road from the Greenbrier on Route US-60.

After dinner, the group returned to the Greenbrier for the famous Tree Lighting ceremony which will continue every Saturday night until December 23, 2016. As candles are distributed to all participants, the Greenbrier Entertainers lead the assembled crowd in a medley of holiday favorites from *Frosty the Snowman* to *Deck the Halls* to *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* and beyond, all sung with enthusiastic participation by young and old alike. The highlight of the event is the arrival of Santa Claus, this year played by Greenbrier owner, and West Virginia Governor-elect, Mr. Jim Justice. Professor Jamkhandi gave Santa some Bluefield State memorabilia from the BSC Bookstore and thanked him for hosting us. As one ISO member stated: “The Tree Lighting ceremony was wonderful and so beautiful. We should return again next year. It’s really fun.”

The Greenbrier is an 11,000 acre resort hotel surrounded by the Allegheny Mountains and located in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. It has been in operation since 1778 and is a National Historic Landmark. Lured by its natural mineral springs and the hotel’s luxurious rooms, buildings, grounds, and artwork, the hotel’s many amenities continue to draw royalty, celebrities and business leaders from around the world to its doors. Indeed, the Greenbrier boasts that at least 26 US presidents have been guests of the hotel. Offering over 710 rooms, 33 suites, 96 guest and estate homes, 10 lobbies, 40-plus meeting rooms, and a complete conference center facility, the Greenbrier also features a championship golf course, fine dining, an ice-skating rink, more than 55 activities, designer boutiques, mineral spa, and a 103,00 square foot gaming and entertainment venue.

For additional information, contact Colin S. Cavell, Ph.D. at ccavell@bluefieldstate.edu, 304-327-4034.

		<h1>Bluefield State College</h1>	
<h2>International Student Organization (ISO)</h2>			
<p>Jelena Jevtić President</p>	<p>Shonté Cargill Vice President</p>	<p>Marta Briaes Treasurer</p>	<p>Thais Nogueira Nunes Secretary</p>
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<p>To be added to or deleted from the ISO email listserv, send a message requesting either to be added or deleted to ccavell@bluefieldstate.edu.</p>			
<p>ISO meetings are held twice a month on the first and third Mondays of each month during the fall and spring semesters at 11:00 a.m. in the Greek Lounge of the Othello Harris-Jefferson Student Center on the BSC Bluefield, WV campus.</p>			