

Hello and welcome to the Valley today. I am your host, Janet Miko. It is Laurel Ridge Community College Day. We do that every single month on the second Thursday of the month. I'm on the zoom today, as always with Di Curtis. Guy Curtis is the director of marketing for Lower Ridge Community College. We've got sociology professor Larry Freberg joining us from the college as well. And a bonus, Kristen Leis is back with us. She, you will remember, is the executive director at Bell Grove. They've all come together and are hosting a conference at Lower Ridge Community College on October 26th at the Middletown campus. 60 slaves for sale reckoning with enslavement in the Shenandoah Valley. So thank you all for joining me today. Guy Curtis, a little bit of a switch from what we normally talk about during the year. Yes, absolutely. And I think it's a big part and focus of what we're trying to accomplish at the college is connecting with the community. We have many programs that we offer throughout the year that focus on diversity and strengthening our local areas that we serve. And so today's program,

talking about an event that's hoping to engage, educate, encourage people to come to campus from all backgrounds, bringing new ideas, learning new information, and of course, making valuable connections. So we're super excited to have Larry on today and Kristen to talk about their upcoming event. Kristen, I want to start with you because that's kind of how the story starts. I understand that one of your colleagues across the street literally was doing some research and found an old newspaper clipping about slaves being sold at Belle Grove. Give me a little history, a little background. Yeah. So we've been actively researching African American history at Belle Grove, and sadly, that means the history of enslavement there. Isaac Hite Junior at Elk Grove was in 1810 and 1820 third and fourth largest in slavery, according to census records in Frederick County, which at that point included Clark County and part of Warren. So that's pretty big deal. Belle was in Cedar Creek, in Elk Grove National Historical Park, and one of our Ranger colleagues, Kyle Rothman, actually was doing some research,

came across this ad, and it was really sobering to see it in black and white print in Washington, DC newspaper that Isaac Hite was not only selling farm implements and livestock, but advertised in some specificity that he was selling 60 human beings. And so this just intrigued us for many years. We researched it further. One of the opening speakers of the conference will sort of put the ad in context, what we can tell from what information it gives us, but it was pointed out to us by our former board chair, Wayne Selfridge, that we were coming up on the 200th anniversary of the sale. So this conference is scheduled to be 200 years to the day of when the sale was scheduled to have happened at the Elk Grove. And then, Larry, I understand you entered the picture when Kristin reached out because she had a curiosity about where these families may have ended up, where these enslaved people went off to after they had been bought. Yes, Kristin reached out probably two years ago, approximately to see how Laurel Ridge might become involved in filming The Mission, or the idea of bringing people

together to learn more about this event. And I think over the past couple of years, even more information has come to light as Kristin and Wayne and others have researched even further into the lives of the people who were enslaved to bring those stories to life. So, Kristin, what do you hope to gain? What is the purpose of providing this education to the masses in a conference this way? Well, a lot of the historians that we work with locally, we're well networked using the Shenandoah Valley, Shenandoah University, Laurel Ridge, The Hamlet Archives, Shenandoah County Archives. We all are pretty well networked. A lot of us are doing this research on local African-American history, pre-Civil War, and one thing that we fear is happening in our community is it's not really well known history. We really want people to understand this was our own backyards where this history was happening. And I think even when we get fourth graders coming to Elk Grove for school trips and we're talking about this subject, I think even some of their textbooks might lead you to believe slavery happened maybe

in the Tidewater of Virginia or just in the Deep South where they grew cotton. We don't grow cotton here. We didn't grow tobacco here in the northern Shenandoah Valley. It was a green economy and livestock and other industries like the iron industry. And so people don't necessarily associate those types of activities with slavery.

And so we really wanted to share with our community that this happened in their own backyard.

And then for other members of our community to acknowledge their family's past, the history of systemic racism that began in this era and sadly continues in some elements today. That's why we need to use the word reckoning in the title of the conference. The 60 slaves for sale is a. For an ad, and then we use a term reckoning. It's something we just all feel strongly that needs to be reckoned with, acknowledged, and for these lives of these individuals to be honored. Larry, as a sociology professor, the broader conversation, too, needs to happen because I feel like national news, everything that we have seen in recent years, there are two camps. One camp wants to sweep

everything under the rug and say, you can't change it, so why talk about it? But the other camp wants to say history repeats itself. If you're not aware of the history itself, and it still provides valuable insight when Kristin is talking about topics like systemic racism. Absolutely. And some of my interest, specifically with Bell Grove came about from the archaeological work that Matthew Greer had done, bringing through what little evidence is still around, buried in the ground, learning about the lives of people who were enslaved and how they used what they had available to really resist the structures of society, to live and engage in a life that was meaningful to them even through this horrible time, was, I thought, really important. And I think bringing to life the stories of the past as best we can helps, in my opinion, build strength within the community, understanding that we have this shared experience, these shared stories, even if we weren't alive at the time, I think is very meaningful today. And sure, it can help us not repeat the mistakes or the tragedies or the traumas of the past. But I

also think it gives us some common ground to understand where we are today and how that impacts the way we view our community and our society and our world. So yeah, I think it's really important to bring these stories to life. Kristen, one of the things that you had highlighted that was in this ad was the fact that families are kept together, which on one hand you think, oh, okay, that's a good thing. I say in air quotes with a question mark. But then they designated children as young as eight years old, sometimes were actually considered adults. They weren't necessarily kept with their family like we would think. And that's some really interesting context to be able to put to something like this happening. Yeah, it's one of the most horrific aspects of the whole system of chattel slavery in this country was that separation of families. And this is the kind of context that our opening speak to. Calvin Schermerhorn is going to be discussing. What is the economics of enslavement. And yes, by eight years old, children could have some type of labor to offer and might be separated from their

families. Now, unfortunately, Belle Grove doesn't have we haven't at this time come across any sort of deeds of sale or any other direct evidence of which individuals were sold and where they may have gone. However, the Heights kept lists of the people that they enslaved, and so we can see a list that was written prior to this date and a list written after this date. And we find that 55 names are missing without any other explanation or some names that are missing. But there's an explanation that we can reasonably see in the record that we have. And so we do see two girls in the age of eight that possibly were sold. So it's hard history to talk about it. It's a hard way to say, come out and spend a Saturday with us and talk about this. But there are some aspects of the conference that we're going to be discussing. What other descendants of people who had been enslaved, what they're doing with the information, how they're using it to connect to their families past, reclaim the history, learn about ancestors that haven't been written in the history books. Bring their names to light. So that's a big part of this



conference, is saying the names of these 55 people. And then we're using some artistic aspects too. So Monica James is our professor at Laurel Ridge, and she and her students are currently in the midst of making an amazing mural that's a family tree, one of the families at Bell Grove. And so that's an exciting part of the conference that we're looking forward to. She's going to even have an art project that conference attendees can participate in when they're at the conference. And we're going to have some musical offerings as well, using some African drumming. So there are ways of we hope I'm going beyond just the gut wrenching facts. How difficult is it doing this research? The other thing that we see a lot of happening now are people doing their genealogy traces. You can get online, you can buy these subscriptions. But for you, this is even more complicated because there's just no other than their names on a list. It's not like you can do a full family tree, because I would imagine, too, that when these people were sold, they probably didn't stay in the Shenandoah Valley. They could have ended up in other states

in other parts of the country to. Correct. Yeah.

And that's that was another reason I reached out to. Larry was because Ridge and Oak Grove in Middletown are right along route 11, and route 11 was a major North-South corridor for the domestic slave trade. So the international slavery was abolished in 1808. But then a domestic slave trade started to flourish in this country. And we know that Virginia planters were starting to sell human beings to the Deep South because cotton started to boom. That was an industry, that slave trade was an industry. And we do think Isaac Hite partook in it in some way. So that's part of trying to understand the actual context at the time of that and what's going on in Isaac Height's life at the time he placed the ad. So that's something we'll be talking about. But yeah, just to know that route 11 that we travel all the time today could have had what they call coffins, people chained together, walking south. You can take route 11 to New Orleans today. Some of the research that I've started to do after learning about this ad was just looking what newspapers in our community had

been digitalized and available through the Library of Virginia or the Library of Congress, to look more closely at advertisements for selling people who were enslaved, advertisements for runaways. And also what I was looking for was advertisements for trading or leasing, the leasing out humans or people who were enslaved for the year. And from what I found so far, it was pretty commonplace to see multiple advertisements in the weekly or monthly newsprint for people in the antebellum period. In our communities, people may have been desensitized really to seeing or through couples of people moving through the valley and reading about it. I think there's something really desensitizing about that. Let's take a break. When we come back, let's talk a little bit more about the conference day, how much it cost, where do I get my ticket, and that sort of stuff, obviously the logistics of it. But let's talk a little bit more about what people are going to be able to learn and some of the experiences that they're going to be educated on. Can we do that in the next segment? Absolutely. We are on the zooms

today for Laurel Ridge Community College Day. Guy Curtis, director of marketing, is joining us.

Along with him is sociology professor Larry Frydenberg and Kristen Leys from Belle Grove Plantation. We're going to talk more with them when we come back about their conference that they're having on October 26th at the Middletown campus. It is called 60 slaves for Sale Reckoning with enslavement in the Shenandoah Valley. We're going to do that in just a couple of minutes.

Hello everyone. I'm Steven and I'm Kim. We would love to meet you at our new Winchester Cider Works tasting room on East Piccadilly Street in Old Town.

That's right. We'll be downtown with great ciders, wine, food and even beer. And the best part is, we're so excited to be part of this brand new passport program where you just need four stamps from Winchester area breweries and cider. Ways to get some great free swag. So pop by our tasting room and we'll get you a passport. You can find out more information at [Winchester Brew trail.com](http://WinchesterBrew.com).

Welcome back to the Valley today. I am your host, Janet Michael. It is Laurel Ridge Community

College day. I, Curtis is on the zoom with us. He is there. Director of marketing. Joining him is sociology professor Larry Greenberg. Kristen Leys is also on the zoom with us. She is the executive director at Hillgrove Plantation. We're talking about a conference that they have partnered together on. They are hosting called 60 slaves for Sale Reckoning with enslavement and the Shenandoah Valley. Kristen, before we get in the weeds on the conference itself and how it's going to work, give me the basic logistics. When is it? Where is it? How do I get a ticket? That sort of thing. It is Saturday, October 26th. They'll start at nine in the morning. The program will conclude by four, but we're hoping that people will have a little extra time to network afterwards. You can get all of the information and register at Laurel Ridge. That's all. One word. Again, you slash 60 as I asked you why, and that will get you to the conference website. We have bios of the speakers. Some of this historical background that we've just been discussing are reasons for the conference and then how to register. Just a quick registration

and it's \$20 per person, but that's just really to cover the cost of lunch. So we have a full hot lunch from hitting the spot catering. And that will be part of our date as well. Is there a particular demographic that you really think would get the most benefit from this? You mentioned earlier, Kristen, that you get a lot of fourth graders that come to Belle Grove. Is this something that parents should bring their fourth graders to, or is this more adult oriented type of topic? I would say it's a it's more adult oriented, but I think high school and college students would find this very interesting. I think younger students, it might be just a little more academic than they might be comfortable and interested in sitting through them, but I would certainly leave that up to parents discretion. But certainly high school and college students, and we really do hope that our college communities will have students that come to this. And certainly we'd love to have teachers attend. And some of the information that we share might be something they could bring back to their classrooms. Otherwise, it's all ages and

all backgrounds. We do have another part of the day that's important is that we are invited. Different community groups. I referenced earlier that we have a great network in the valley of different groups that are working on African American history, from the Josephine School in Berryville to the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project in Harrisonburg. And I think for folks that are interested in history, they might not realize how much is going on behind the scenes. So we've invited those groups to come and have a table. So if anyone's listening, they think that their organization would be someone that would be interested in having a table. That's actually it gives you two free registration slots if you're willing to have a table with your information. And then there's different times during the day where we can network and participants can chat with those organizations further. And your keynote speaker is quite educated on this topic in particular, but he's going to make it specific to this community. It's not where people are going to come and learn about the enslaved population from

across the country. They're going to learn a little bit more about it here in the Shenandoah Valley and in Belle Grove in particular. Yeah. Doctor Calvin Schermerhorn is our opening speaker, and he went to the University of Virginia. So he knows quite a lot about the history of slavery, how it interacts with American capitalism and other contextual elements from the 19th century in American history. And so he will be speaking about what the ad tells us and what sort of the context is behind that. And then we're going to follow up with several speakers. So Rebecca Davis works at Montpelier, and that's the home of James Madison. Now, James Madison, sister Nellie was married to Isaac. They'll grow. So Elk Grove and Montpelier have definitely a tight connection in ownership of the homes, but also in the enslaved community, because when Nellie Madison came to the Valley to marry Isaac Kight, her father gave him 15 enslaved people from Montpelier. And later, when her father died, they inherited even more so. We are directly connected through our enslaved communities as well, and Rebecca has been working with the Montpelier



Foundation and the Montpelier Descendant Committee to develop memorialization and other types of activities to fully give voice to the enslaved community about Grove and their descendants today.

So we're really excited to hear about their efforts, and I think that could give us ideas about future efforts in the Valley. And then in the afternoon after lunch time to network during lunch, participate in some of those art projects that I mentioned. We're going to have a great panel moderated by Doctor Michael Blakey. This is from College of William and Mary, and he is an expert in working with descendant communities to all aspects of African-American histories, work throughout the state of Virginia in the country on some really exciting projects, and we will be talking to some folks working locally. Doctor Shelly Murphy is working with descendants of enslaved people at the University of Virginia that includes at Blandly. So Blandly is a site. It's owned by the University of Virginia, and it was a site of enslavement. So she's been working on that research. Jane Ailes is a local researcher. That's

done quite a lot. She's a wealth of knowledge and doing this type of historical research and has created several research databases. And then Lisa Johnson is a private individual who's just so involved in her family history research that she's been quite a resource to a lot of us as well, and done some really exciting outreach with her family members. So I'm excited for that panel in the afternoon, and then we're going to have an honoring ceremony and some great music, as I mentioned before, to close out our day. I am a huge fan of panel discussions. I feel like sometimes you get so much more information as you're watching conversations take place in front of you. Maybe it's because it's what I do for a living, so I'm a little biased, but I feel like sometimes that you get more out of it when you have these different perspectives and different people talking with different backgrounds about a same subject than necessarily listening to one person give a talk about one particular topic. So I like that you've really made this a diverse kind of day as well, and that people are going to get

all sorts of different options in different ways  
to educate themselves in the way that suits them  
the best. That was our plan.

But I'm going to get on my soapbox for a second  
and reiterate how you and I, month after month,  
talk about the stellar opportunities that are  
available at Laurel Ridge Community College and  
how community colleges as a whole sometimes get a  
bad rap because they're not at the same level that  
people think for universities like University of  
Virginia, Shenandoah University. It is outstanding  
to me that these types of resources are available  
to our community at Laurel Ridge Community College,  
so sing it from the rooftops. I won't be singing  
anytime soon. Absolutely. We've had a ton of  
missed opportunity to highlight events like the  
one that we're featuring on October 26th, but we  
have many lifelong learning opportunities and  
speaker series that we're hoping to encourage come  
to us art shows, book clubs, and more. And so  
having some of these events on our campuses and  
open them to the community was our focus for today  
to talk about how we can bring more of these

events. So if you like what you're hearing about today, and we're really hope more of these events come back to the college in some more form. Please let us know. So we've established a very nice landing page for edu forward slash connections.

Give us some feedback or attend the event on the 26 to just engage with our local community. Learn more about what we have to offer. And so I think we are a diamond in the rough, if you will, when it comes to how we engage your local community.

Amazing faculty and staff and groups that come in and support us. And so we want to share more. And so it's a great opportunity like this event. And to highlight this one. And for the ones coming we're very excited about the opportunity to do that. So we are your local community college.

We're serving you in some cases we're connecting with so many folks. It's just it's unheard of.

We're happy to be a supporter in that way. And Larry, I saw your smile when I said you guys are as good as, if not better in many cases than high powered universities. As a professor at Laurel Ridge, I'm sure you feel that way. I don't like to

say evaluative or judgmental things, but I definitely feel like we offer students an opportunity to interact directly with faculty and staff and support, like I. And also, I think we encourage students to make connections with the community. Like this event on October 26th to bring students together with Bill Grove, because I think, again, it's just additional opportunities to learn and to connect. The word community is in that's the name of the college. And sometimes I think we've lost sight of what community is. But community involves people, however you think about it, and I think the people make the difference.

Absolutely. Guy Curtis, tell me one more time, where can people go to learn more about this particular conference and get their tickets? What is that web address? Yes, it's launch the Edu for 6060. They can register and pay for your conference attendance and also sign up to register for your table if you wish to attend as a vendor. So we're looking forward to have folks come out. There is a link on the registration page, the lower risk edu slash 60, that takes you to

information about the enslaved community at Belle Grove, which I think has a wealth of information. Just wanted to share. Get that shout out real quick. Kristen. None of this happens in a vacuum. As we're learning the community all has to come together for you to have the speakers, to understand the topics, to gather the information, and to help pay for events like this. Sponsors are really important as well. Absolutely. We're so delighted to partner with Laurel Ridge Jr. Carl and Emily Thompson conference center is such a great facility. It's really making this so much easier for us. And they provided some great assistance with the website and the partnership with Monica James and our department. We love that Crescent City Charities is another major funder. And Elk Grove had a wonderful board member, John Adamson, who's very active with Elk Grove and also the Shenandoah County Historical Society. And sadly, he passed away several years ago unexpectedly, and there was just an outpouring of support to the Shenandoah County Historical Society and Elk Grove. And so the memorial funds,

the John Adamson Memorial funds from both organizations are being used to fund the event.

And then Don and Linda Sue. Are private donors that also heard about the conference they can't attend. They live in California, but they wanted to support it. So we're just so grateful for everyone's support to make this possible. Where can people go to learn more about Bel Grove? Give me the Bel Grove contact information. Certainly if you go to [Belgrove.org](http://Belgrove.org), I'm going to put a link right up on that homepage that links you to the conference and to more information that you can find out about the history of excitement at Elk Grove. Lots to read. Kristin, thank you for taking some time to give me some insight today, I appreciate it. My pleasure. Thank you for your time, Jana. Larry, can I audit one of your classes? Oh, absolutely. I don't want to say this, but you have to be old enough.

As someone who celebrated her birthday this past week, I'm pretty sure I'm in that category. Okay.

Yes, absolutely. Okay. Yeah. The AARP stuff is coming hard and heavy to my mailbox every single

day. Guy Curtis, thank you for pulling this whole thing together I appreciate it. Yes, absolutely. I really enjoyed it. Just the knowledge of information. Share today. Wow. I've gained a lot. I hope I can attend on the 26 but you know me and my busy schedule. Oh yeah, your kids probably have an athletic activity, or you may have a golf tournament that you're knee deep in the middle of planning. There's a lot of stuff going on. But yeah, so thank you for having us, Janet. What a wonderful show today and we're looking forward to folks too. Coming out on Saturday, October 26th, I will be back tomorrow with a brand new episode of The Valley. Today we're celebrating a little bit of a different kind of history. Winchester Cap is turning 50 years old this year, and they are celebrating with a huge gala at the end of this month on the 24th of October. So Andrea Cousins, their executive director, is going to meet up with me tomorrow and talk about their history, their services and how you can get tickets for that gala that's being hosted at the GW in Winchester. It's going to be really cool. It's got a fashion show



with clothing from their clothing house, and the chef at GW has put the menu together based on food that you can find at the food pantry at C cap. So it's going to be a really cool event. You'll get more details about that tomorrow just a few minutes after noon.