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Plugging the 'brain drain'

Shale boom helps bring some of state's best, brightest home

By **MORGAN MYERS**
Central PA Shale Play

Rural Pennsylvania has a history of losing its best and brightest minds to metropolitan areas, a phenomenon known as "brain drain." But the shale boom is bringing them back.

"I grew up in a small town so living and working in a major metro area was not ideal for me," environmental scientist Ryan Coleman, of McVeytown, said.

Coleman left his home state of Pennsylvania to pursue professional opportunities in urban Delaware after graduating from Penn State University in 2007.

"There were a few jobs available in central PA at the time but the pay was significantly below the average starting salary for an environmental scientist. I couldn't afford to pursue those opportunities with col-



PHOTO PROVIDED

Ryan Coleman, of McVeytown, marks the boundary of a natural wetland by tying a bright ribbon around one of the plants. Coleman is one of many Pennsylvania natives who have returned "home" to work in the natural gas industry thanks to the Marcellus Shale

lege loans nipping at my heels," Coleman said.

Like Coleman, Penn State alum-

ni Chris Underwood, of Exton, also moved to the city after graduation.

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Marcellus Camp gives students real experience

By **MORGAN MYERS**
Central PA Shale Play

MANSFIELD — High school students interested in careers in the natural gas industry recently took classes ranging from Marcellus mapping to job site safety at the Mansfield University 2013 Marcellus Camp.

"The ultimate goal is for campers to gain some knowledge and hands-on experience so they have a better understanding of where their interests may fit into the natural gas industry," said Lindsey Sikorski, director of the Marcellus Institute at Mansfield University.

Mansfield University partnered with Williams, Seatrax, Chesapeake Energy, Universal Well Services, Pennsylvania College of Technology and Tioga County Conservation District to bring students hands-on learning sessions. Ten campers from across Pennsylvania attended the camp.

"My favorite part was putting on the hazmat suit," said Darton Harwick, 18, of Troy.

Campers tried on personal protective equipment as part of the job site safety class taught by Dr. Lee Stocks. Stocks reviewed Occupational Health and Safety Administration policies and the importance of being able to self-rescue.

In addition to explaining the history of industrial safety legislation, Stocks asked the students to consider theoretical accidents and how to respond.

"You arrive at the scene and find a 1,000-liter tote container with the label 1824 leaking a liquid. What kind of situation are we dealing with?" Stocks asked.

Using the Emergency Response Guidebook, campers identified 1824 as sodium hydroxide, a cor-

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UNIVERSITY



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Plugging the 'brain drain'

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A self-described "country boy," he felt the itch to return home before long.

"When my wife and I lived in Boston and later in Philadelphia, we were burning the candle at both ends. There was no enjoyment — just a constant rat race. I liked the urban lifestyle for a few years but then it sort of wore on me," Underwood said.

With a professional background in environmental remediation, Underwood decided he wanted to return to his central Pennsylvania home to do "all shale all the time" after working on a water resource study for a production company.

"It was sort of like a lightning rod, something to be excited about again," Underwood said.

The gas industry, well known for supporting jobs for roughnecks and roustabouts, also has brought white-collar opportunities to the area. Coleman and Underwood found employment at RETTEW, a Pennsylvania engineering firm that caters to the natural gas industry, among other client types.

"Simply put, services are required that were not before," RETTEW Project Manager Patrick Walko said.

According to the state Department of Labor and Industry, the number of environmental consultants increased 112 percent from 2009 to 2012. Engineering services increased 106 percent during the same period.

"I perform wetland delineations, erosion and sedi-

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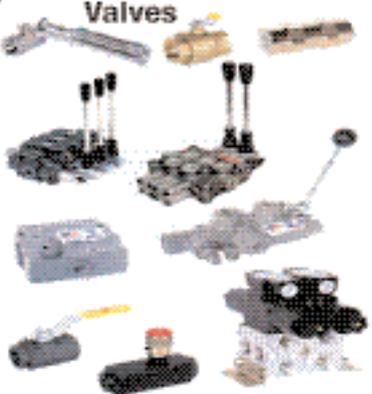
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RETTEW natural resources scientists take depth readings and investigate the habitat of a stream as

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Plugging the 'brain drain'

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ment control inspections, environmental site assessments and monitor the compliance of environmental permits," Coleman, a RETTEW environmental scientist, said.

These family-sustaining white-collar jobs are revitalizing depressed rural communities, Underwood said.

"You drive around rural PA and you can tell a lot of these ghost towns used to be centers of money, power and commerce. The shale has brought life back to local people who now can find employment," Underwood said.

From 2009 to 2012, employment in core Marcellus Shale industries increased 149.2 percent, employment in ancillary industries increased 7.9 percent and employment in all industries increased 2.7 percent, according to the state Department of Labor and Industry.

"RETTEW has hired numer-



WALKO

ous individuals in the past few years who were lured to the state because of new natural gas industry career opportunities," Holly White, RETTEW mar-

keting and communications specialist, said. While serving Marcellus-related clients can be demanding, the fast pace and high expectations are welcome challenges, Underwood said.

"It's a constant juggling act but I'm fascinated by the field. Oil and gas exploration is really cutting-edge — it's an industry you can get behind," Underwood said.

RETTEW employees place an emphasis on developing strong, lasting relationships with their Marcellus clients.

"It is important to maintain excellent relationships and not

chase business opportunities," Walko said. "Everyone knows each other and resources often are shared so there's a major focus on establishing relationships for the long-term."

Long-term relationships are exactly the type that Underwood and Coleman are grateful to have the opportunity to nurture.

"My older daughter said the other day, 'We're not going to move again, are we, daddy?' And I said, 'No, honey.' We look forward to many more years in the area," Underwood said.

Coleman enjoys the small-town sense of community and the fact that "people are more willing to slow down and get to know who you are."

"I'll take small town over the big city any day," Coleman said.



UNDERWOOD

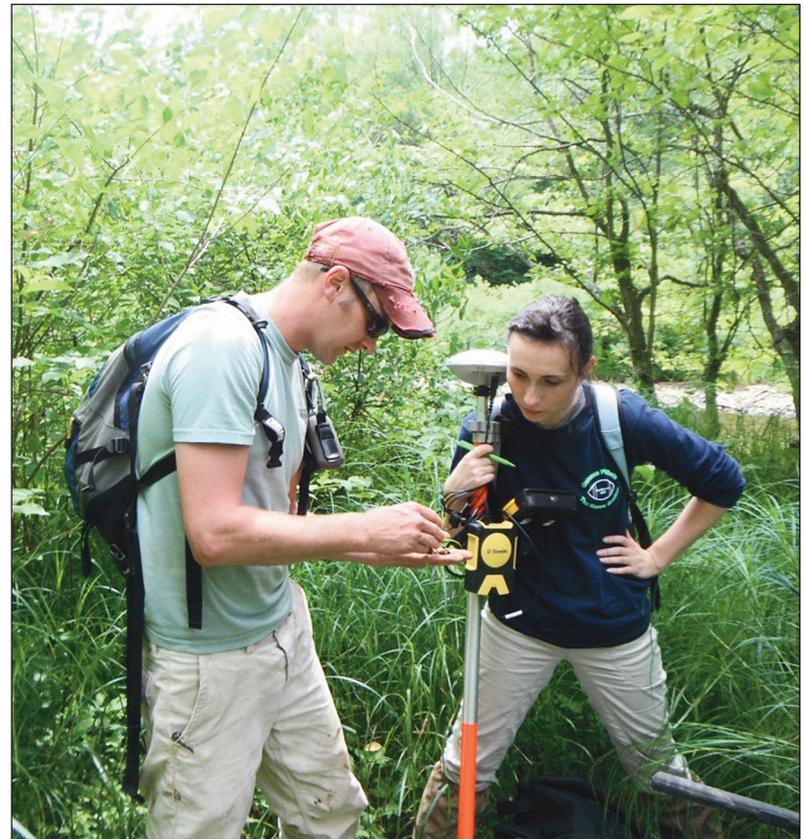


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RETTEW scientists examine the natural wildlife in a central

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