

Reconnecting McDowell

www.ReconnectingMcDowell.org

Stay Connected with McDowell

McDowell County is an American story that deserves a new chapter—one filled with promise, with goodwill, with the type of shared commitment that offers solid reasons to believe in a brighter future. Be a part of this historic partnership and show your support for McDowell's children and the greater community by joining the effort at www.reconnectingmcdowell.org.

School Technology Audit Shows Strong Start

Members of the Reconnecting McDowell technology subcommittee conducted an audit of the McDowell County public school system, as well as the county's current Internet service, to assess and address immediate and long-term needs.

"I have to commend the technical experts in the McDowell school system," says Pete Cevenini, education lead for Cisco's Internet Business Solutions Group and co-chair of the technology subcommittee. They have set up a good system, he says, and once they have the ability to connect to broadband Internet services, they will be "ready to be up

and running" so students will be able to use the new services immediately.

West Virginia's ongoing broadband project, West Virginia Network, is working to have high-speed Internet access to all McDowell public schools by Sept. 1, while Shentel, a Reconnecting McDowell partner, is expanding access to 10,000 households.

The audit team met with school technology staff and visited numerous sites, including River View and Mount View high schools, the proposed teacher village site, and Phoenix Center, an alternative education facility that

will be converted into a professional development center. They also toured the Workforce West Virginia location where community members can take online courses to receive their GED certificates.

"Our goal is to help keep moving the technology forward," explains Cevenini. "Now we have a sense of what type of support is needed to start innovative programs such as video streaming of lessons for homebound students, virtual learning to help alleviate school staff shortages, and virtual job shadowing for job training, just to name a few."

Summer Academic Academy Focused on Art Education

Students, parents and staff celebrated their hard work at the end of McDowell public schools' Summer Academic Academy. All students in prekindergarten-grade 4 were invited to attend the summer program, with a special invitation sent to those students who were at risk for retention. More than 180 children attended daily and were served breakfast and lunch at each of the five academy sites.

The academy's curriculum included reading, mathematics, physical fitness; and a large component of the program was geared toward fostering a love for the arts. All the children received individualized instruction based on their personal strengths and weaknesses.

School staff will build on this foundation to continue building the arts education program in the regular school year.

Parents played a vital part in making the program a success. In addition to receiving daily communications, parents were invited to the school sites to meet with teachers, discuss their children's progress, attend student performances, and take a gallery walk of students' artwork and displays.

Reconnecting McDowell partners AFT-West Virginia, the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association and the state AFL-CIO provided financial support for the Summer Academy Celebration at Linkous Park in Welch on July 26.



Reconnecting McDowell was featured at the July 29 general session of the AFT Convention in Detroit. McDowell County student Trey Lockhart, Delegate Clif Moore, and West Virginia Board of Education vice president Gayle Manchin spoke to convention delegates.

McDowell Educators Attend Common Core Standards Summer Boot Camp

School may be out, but learning is still in session for McDowell educators. Joining teams from across the country, McDowell school and district staff received intensive training on the Common Core State Standards at AFT workshops held June 29 – July 1. Together, they learned how to implement the standards most effectively, and how to pass that knowledge and enthusiasm on to their colleagues, parents and other community stakeholders.

The Common Core standards are a comprehensive system that incorporates curriculum, professional development, instructional resources and assessments.

The standards were developed to help ensure that students are receiving a high-quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state.

Participants at the AFT conference attended in teams, so that principals, teachers and others from the same district sat together, listening to examples of how other districts have brought different stakeholders together to successfully begin implementation.

West Virginia is among the 45 states, the District of Columbia and two U.S. territories that have adopted the Common Core standards, which now are being implemented throughout the state's public school system.

VOICES FROM McDOWELL

"As a native of southern West Virginia, it is very **rewarding to work** closely with the communities of McDowell County as we strive together to make **positive change** through our **collaborative efforts**."

—KRISTEN O'SULLIVAN HARRISON, southern regional director, Catholic Charities West Virginia, a Reconnecting McDowell partner.



In Memoriam—Thomas Hatcher

Reconnecting McDowell remembers and honors Thomas Hatcher, mayor of the town of War, and a teacher and AFT member at Southside K-8 School who died July 17. Like too many families in McDowell County, the Hatcher family has been tragically affected by the area's rampant drug problems. Police arrested his daughter-in-law and her brother on first-degree murder charges related to Hatcher's death. Police believe they robbed the mayor to buy prescription pills.

Hatcher's son has battled drug addiction and is currently incarcerated on drug-related charges; and in 2010, Hatcher's nephew died of a drug overdose.

Hatcher graduated from Big Creek High School; he received a B.S. and an M.A. degree from West Virginia University, and a Ph.D. in developmental psychology and education from Ohio State University. Hatcher worked as a teacher in



McDowell and Monongalia Counties.

Hatcher was active in a wide variety of community activities and served as mayor of War from 1997 until his death. During his tenure, the city made great strides toward fiscal responsibility and accountability. It also completed a much-needed sanitation system and made many other infrastructure improvements. He was deeply involved and committed to the development of a strategic plan for development of the city, the school district and Big Creek High School.

He also served as president of the McDowell County Commission on Aging; as treasurer of the War Public Library; was on the board of directors of FACES, a community action collation, and the Council of Southern Mountains. He was a member of the McDowell County Economic Development Authority and had been a board member of the Big Creek TEAM Center and the War Food Center.

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Want to get involved or learn more?

For more information about Reconnecting McDowell or to find out how you can get involved, contact AFT-West Virginia staff member Debra Elmore at delmore@aftwv.org or 304-552-5766.