

Reconnecting McDOWELL

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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.

Broader Horizons Mentees Attend the Democratic National Convention

Thirty students from Reconnecting McDowell's Broader Horizons mentorship program attended the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia July 23-29. The group included participants from all three years of the program—varied in age from high school juniors to college freshmen.

The week began with a delegate service project led by the City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, which connects parolees

and Philadelphia residents with community service and opportunities to create large works of art throughout the city. The mentees, along with other volunteers, helped paint pieces of two murals that will be displayed in Philadelphia.

After lunch at Reading Terminal Market, the students attended a riveting interfaith service. The theme was "Stronger Together: In Pursuit of Love and Happiness," and featured readings delivered by young people representing different faiths and backgrounds. Singers Stacy Francis and the Hoskins Family led the music, and the Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes delivered a message that left attendees energized and in great spirits.

The Broader Horizons mentees were treated to a tour of the Wells Fargo Center before the Democratic National Convention began. There, they were shown the stage setup, given behind-the-scenes information, and got a glimpse at the over 100,000 balloons that were released on the final night of the convention.

They also learned about Philadelphia with a visit to the Liberty Bell as well



Olivia Vaughn, left, and Adrienne Montgomery met actress Lynn Whitfield, center, at the convention. The students also were excited to see other celebrities, including Demi Lovato, Lady Gaga, Jason Collins, Lenny Kravitz and Debra Lee.

as a stop at the National Constitution Center, where they learned about past presidents, the U.S. Constitution, the electoral process and historic moments in American history. A highlight for the students was using 3-D goggles to learn about Philadelphia's rich history and the role the city played in the drafting of the Constitution.

A week packed with activities

On two mornings, West Virginia convention delegates welcomed the students to be part of the delegation's breakfast program. On Monday, State Treasurer John Perdue and Secretary of State Natalie Tennant talked with the students about college life and offered them advice on achieving their career goals. On Tuesday, Broader Horizons mentees Kelsie Potter and Nadia Johnson addressed the delegates and spoke about their beloved McDowell County and how the Broader Horizons program has changed their lives. U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, who has been a dedicated supporter of Reconnecting McDowell and the Broader Horizons

program, later met with the students to share encouraging words and answer their questions.

In addition to participating in convention events, students engaged in a peer mentoring session where they shared their career goals in small groups. They were then tasked with creating vision boards for the upcoming year and listing three things they will do every day to achieve their goals. Finally, students talked about their visions for the County and different community-based initiatives they could all work on together to achieve those visions.

They also visited Temple University to learn about the institution's history and to visit with two Temple students who talked with them about life on campus. Marie-Louise Caravatti, a staff member of the American Federation of Teachers, led a session on college applications and accessing financial aid. The students also learned about the importance of networking, building their résumés and career-building tools. McDowell County



Broader Horizons mentee Micah McMillan checks out Temple University's campus.

Board of Education staff member Zanetta Thomas shared her story and

the many obstacles she has faced in her life to encourage the students to pursue their dreams no matter the hardships they may encounter.

Students were credentialed to attend the convention and took in all the speakers and events from a hospitality suite. For many of the students with political aspirations, witnessing the roll

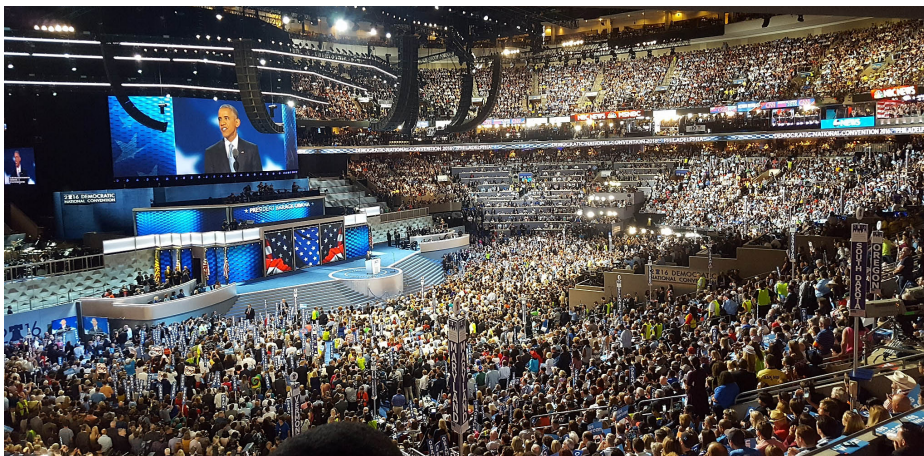
call, hearing the speeches from political figures, and meeting U.S. Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey, former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and former Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley, among others, were the highlights of their experience. Reconnecting McDowell project manager Leah Daughtry also served as the CEO of the Democratic National

Convention and was able to ensure the kids had a great experience throughout the week.

While discussing their week in Philadelphia, Broader Horizons mentee Selena Collins said, "This has been the most memorable trip ever," and Nadia Johnson added that being able to attend the Democratic National Conven-



◀ **Leah Daughtry, Reconnecting McDowell project manager and CEO of the convention, broke away from DNC activities to check in on how the students were doing.**



◀ **The entire group listened as President Barack Obama addressed the convention; many of the students attended the proceedings on all four nights.**

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Upcoming Events

McDowell County Schools' Family Advisory Council monthly meetings will reconvene in September. The meetings encourage parent involvement and provide family learning tools, including information on literacy and good nutrition. The next meeting will be held Sept. 27 at 10:30 a.m. at the Phoenix Center in Welch. Meetings will be held at the same time and location every month. For more information, or if you would like to speak to the group, contact Amanda Fragile, Title I director, at afragile@k12.wv.us or call 304-436-8441 ext. 250.

Want to get involved or learn more?

For more information about Reconnecting McDowell or to find out how you can get involved, contact Kris Mallory, kmallory@aftwv.org, or Debra Elmore at delmore@aftwv.org or 304-552-5766.