

# Reconnecting McDowell

[www.ReconnectingMcDowell.org](http://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](http://www.reconnectingmcdowell.org).

## Teacher Village Project Under Way

Every year, scores of teaching positions go unfilled in McDowell County public schools; one obstacle is that qualified candidates simply cannot find suitable housing. To remove this impediment, Reconnecting McDowell is spearheading an effort to create a "teacher village" in downtown Welch.

"One of the big issues we're dealing with in the educational system is our inability to attract teachers to work in McDowell county," said Bob Brown, the lead coordinator of Reconnecting McDowell, when he spoke to West Virginia Public Broadcasting about the project. "Not because there are not idealistic young people who don't want to come here and work. The issue is that when they come here we can't find

housing. So we're trying to find a way to rectify that problem."

The teacher village is envisioned as a multiunit apartment building in Welch. Reconnecting McDowell is examining several properties in the community and looking closely at a 25,000-sq. ft. facility, the former Best Furniture, to convert into apartments.

The plan also calls for the teacher village to incorporate a common area on the first floor to house a computer lab or public space that can be used for social events, such as an arts exhibit or concert. The plan has attracted a lot of attention from local Welch residents who have approached Brown and encouraged him to follow through on the teacher village.

"I have had complete strangers approach me on the street and ask about the teacher village. They see it as not just a good thing for teachers, but good for the community. It will help to spur new local businesses and new life in downtown Welch," says Brown. "The teacher village is tangible proof of our commitment to helping McDowell help itself."

In the next few months, Reconnecting McDowell staff will oversee a complete examination by an architect and structural engineer of all properties under consideration. After this thorough assessment, a decision will be made on how best to move the teacher village project forward.

## Learning First Alliance



On May 17, a Reconnecting McDowell panel was held at the Learning First Alliance annual Leadership Council Meeting in the National Education Association headquarters in Washington, D.C. Pictured from left Jim Kohlmoos, National Association of State Boards of Education; Jim Brown, former McDowell County school superintendent; Gene Longo, Cisco; Dana Waldo, Frontier Communications; and Bob Brown, Reconnecting McDowell.

## Reconnecting McDowell Is Helping Spread the 'See a Bully, Stop a Bully' Message



Bullying is a community issue that extends beyond the school campus and is prevalent online. To help combat the spread of bullying—and to provide resources to educators, students and parents—the AFT has created an anti-bullying campaign, called "See a Bully, Stop a Bully: Make a Difference." Reconnecting McDowell distributed materials from this campaign at the Drug and Violence-Free Awareness Day held at Mount View High School on May 5. AFT-West Virginia staff handed out anti-bullying posters designed for elementary and middle school students, as well as "See a Bully, Stop a Bully" wristbands to school employees and students.

## Reconnecting McDowell Distributes Educational Materials at McDowell County Fair

Reconnecting McDowell took part in this year's McDowell County Fair held May 29-June 2 in Gary, distributing AFT-created booklets for parents, which are aimed at helping their children in school, using the library and encouraging reading. Several people stopped at the Reconnecting McDowell booth and told us how glad they were to see the much-needed project come into the county. They also said they appreciate the project's efforts to make positive change in the area, and commented on the wisdom of taking a long-term approach.

The McDowell County Economic Development Authority, a Reconnecting McDowell partner, resurrected the county fair six years ago and continues



working on expanding the fair and making it a tradition. This year's event was well attended; county residents turned out for the live entertainment, which featured country music artist John Michael Montgomery.

## Summer Tips for Parents and Caregivers

School may be out for the summer, but that doesn't mean learning should stop. Here are some ideas for easy things to do with children over the summer to keep their young minds active.

1. Enroll in summer programs. There are free ones. Look for them in the newspaper or see if certain clubs or even the child's school may be conducting a summer program.
2. Set time aside every day for learning. As little as 15 minutes a day is all you need for the children to read or practice math.
3. A trip to the supermarket can support math and reading as well. Playing word games in the store can enhance spelling and vocabulary. How many things start with the letter B?—banana, bread, butter, etc.
4. Encourage a sport; activity provides the brain with oxygen, which enhances the learning process.
5. Ask older children to keep a summer journal.
6. Visit the McDowell County Public Library in Welch. It offers many free summer events for toddlers to high school students, including story hours, arts and crafts activities, teen and tween get-togethers. Call the library at 304-436-3070 for times.



**There is a great place in McDowell County** you might want to visit this summer to inspire and educate students: It's the Kimball World War Memorial, which is dedicated to the African-American veterans of World War I. The memorial is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m., and is located at 178 One Way St., Rte. 52 Main St., in Kimball. It was the first memorial built in the United States specifically to honor black veterans of that war, and is the only such memorial still standing. Go to [http://forgottenlegacywwi.org/?page\\_id=31](http://forgottenlegacywwi.org/?page_id=31) for more information.

## Founding Reconnecting McDowell Partners

American Federation of Teachers  
West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin  
Gayle Manchin, vice president of  
West Virginia Board of Education  
and former West Virginia first  
lady  
AFT-West Virginia  
Alliance for Excellent Education  
Alpha Natural Resources  
Appalachian Power  
Benedum Foundation  
Building America Community  
Development Enterprise  
Cisco Systems Inc.  
College Board  
DonorsChoose.org  
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Frontier Communications  
Globaloria  
Grace Bible Church  
Highmark West Virginia Inc.  
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McDowell County Board of  
Education  
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Institute  
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and Technical College  
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West Virginia AFL-CIO  
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West Virginia Sen. Robert Plymale  
West Virginia State Police  
West Virginia Supreme Court  
World Wide Workshop Foundation

## 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](mailto:delmore@aftwv.org) or 304-552-5766.