

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.

Partners Emphasize Ongoing Commitment to Reconnecting McDowell

The partners and board members of Reconnecting McDowell convened in Charleston March 29-30 for their semi-annual meeting, which allows the partners to strategize and set six-month goals for their respective subcommittees. At this meeting, the more than 70 partners in attendance focused on sustainability efforts and areas of improvement that are necessary to ensure the project's longevity.

Olivia Vaughn and Matthew Thornsby, two students from the first year of the Broader Horizons mentorship program, also attended the meeting and participated in the sustainability discussions.

They also spoke about how Broader Horizons had affected their lives, crediting the program and its mentors for their academic improvement and ability to attend college. Both students were passionate about seeing the program, which is funded by AT&T for three years, continue beyond the three-year mark.

The students' and partners' input were used to guide the board meeting discussions. Recurring themes and key takeaways from the partners meeting—which included the improvement of communication strategies, increased local involvement and continuation of the Broader Horizons program—influenced the board's decision-making.

At both meetings, AFT President Randi Weingarten emphasized how strongly the union is committed to McDowell County and Reconnecting McDowell. "The AFT will not abandon this project," she said.

The partners' energy and dedication were equally palpable as they talked about their hopes for the County. Partners and board members left the meeting with a renewed energy to continue the important work being done.

Early Literacy Campaign Contest

McDowell County Schools held a billboard photo contest to raise awareness of the importance of family time and its effect on early literacy, school readiness and attendance. The photos had to depict activities that encouraged family learning, such as reading a book together or playing board games. More than 30 McDowell families submitted photos. The winning entry—submitted by Sandy Paz, a pre-K parent at Anawalt Elementary School—was placed on two billboards in the County.



◀ This winning photograph from the Early Literacy Campaign contest is featured on two billboards in McDowell County.

District Implements Teacher Home Visits

McDowell County Schools launched the K-3 Home Visiting Pilot Project earlier this year. The project's focus is to encourage family engagement and to build relationships between families and educators by having teachers visit their students at home. The district trained 25 teachers in the first phase of the project. They visited each student's home at least

twice during the school year, successfully completing 204 home visits.

On April 9, the participating teachers and families reunited at Mount View High School for a celebratory dinner, where they reflected on lessons learned and how the project benefited them. The district plans to continue the program and train an additional 25 teachers in

the second phase. Teachers from this year's training will pair up with incoming teacher trainees to guide them on their inaugural home visits. The project exemplifies McDowell County Schools' ongoing efforts to foster student success by addressing the needs of the child beyond the classroom.

West Virginia Delegation Attends Community Schools Forum

The Coalition for Community Schools, together with the Albuquerque/Bernalillo Community Schools Partnership, held the Community Schools National Forum in Albuquerque, N.M., April 6-8. The event brought together stakeholders working in various sectors and communities to better the lives and academic achievement of students.

Paula Fields from the West Virginia Department of Education; Ingrida Barker from McDowell County Schools; and John Kennedy, Regional Education Service Agency 1, led a workshop on how the community schools model is used in West Virginia. The presenters facilitated discussions on how they leveraged state, local and regional resources to establish effective community schools

and how the model can be replicated in other rural areas. The workshop allowed stakeholders working in similar communities an opportunity to share the obstacles they face and learn about ways to utilize unique partnerships and available resources to implement the model in their schools.

Early Childhood Fair

The Welch National Guard Armory hosted the McDowell County Schools' Touch a Truck Early Childhood Fair on April 15. The event was free and open to families and children—from newborns to 5-year-olds. The fair was designed to highlight the importance of early childhood education through fun, educational activities. The children enjoyed science experiments, free books, face painting and minibike courses. The kids were able to touch a variety of trucks, including fire engines, ambulances and forklifts, as well as talk to the men and women who operate these vehicles. Parents took part in enrollment screenings for 2016-17 pre-K and Head Start classes. A variety of booths provided books, family resources for parents, giveaways and activities for the children. Reconnecting McDowell, United Way and West Virginia University were among the groups that staffed tables at the event.



◀ The mascot for the Ready Freddy Program talks to a young attendee at the fair. The program teaches children about the transition to kindergarten and the importance of good school attendance.

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Want to get involved or learn more?

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