

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.

Community Schools Model Expanding

Community schools utilize organizational partnerships to connect students with resources they need to address issues that may directly and indirectly affect their academic performance. Resources include dental, mental and physical health services, among others. Community schools also engage and support guardians and the broader community. Usually a facilitator on staff is re-

sponsible for coordinating partnerships to provide students with the health, emotional and social services they need.

Southside K-8 School established itself as a community school in 2015 and is working to incorporate mental health services in its student support system. River View High School and Welch Elementary have begun the process of implementing the community school

model in their schools. Sandy River Middle School believes the model will benefit its students and is now considering becoming a community school, with additional County schools also researching the model. Reconnecting McDowell staff and partners continue to collaborate with the school district to support schools in becoming community schools.

Students Receive Dental Care at School

The Smiles Mobile Dentistry Program was implemented at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year to provide McDowell County students with in-school dental services. Smiles visits each school every six months to give students checkups and, if necessary, schedule restorative services. The program has given dental examinations to 513 students in nine of the County's ten schools; 319 students were referred for restorative work and 179 of those students have received services that included either an extraction or filling. The program aims to complete a total of 1,134 procedures for the remaining

140 students by the end of the fall. Due to inclement weather, Mount View High School was the only school in which services were not provided.

Dr. Jason Roush, West Virginia state dental director, and John Kennedy, who is RESA 1 (Regional Education Service Agencies) Community Schools coordinator and co-chair of Reconnecting McDowell's Health, Social and Wraparound Services Subcommittee, along with Dr. Elliot Schlang, Smiles' dental director, met at Kimball Elementary School this spring. They discussed how to strengthen the collaboration between the state and

the Smiles Mobile Dentistry Program to meet the oral health needs of students in rural counties. The meeting took place during a Smiles visit to the school, which allowed Dr. Roush to see the work being done firsthand. They strategized on how to meet the growing need for restorative services in the County and to improve the consent process for parents and guardians. The trio also discussed the best data collection methods to meet state requirements, while effectively monitoring the County's needs.



◀ State dental director Dr. Jason Roush, left, and Smiles Mobile Dentistry Program dental director Dr. Elliot Schlang, center, look on as Smiles' hygienist and McDowell County resident Lindsey Workman examines a student at Kimball Elementary.

Student Mental Health Services Available

Reconnecting McDowell partners have been working to increase student access to mental health services in the school district. Southern Highlands Community Mental Health Center and Family Options Providers have provided services to Southside K-8 School, Mount View and River View high schools since 2015. This year, outpatient mental health therapy was provided to more than 80 students at those three schools. This fall, KVC West Virginia, a private nonprofit child welfare organization, will deliver mental health services at Kimball and Welch elementary

schools. Southern Highlands and KVC West Virginia will be funded in part by a grant to develop an expanded school mental health plan. The plan includes three-tiered intervention services for students: The first tier is offered to all students; the second tier is for students who need additional services, which can usually be done via group sessions; and tier three is for students who need individual interventions. KVC will also provide in-home therapy to families, which will meet a tremendous need in the County.

Students are referred for outpatient mental health services

through a number of channels, including principals, guidance counselors and student assistance teams in their schools. Students' parents or guardians must provide consent for students to receive services and can choose the provider if more than one is available at a school. The guidance counselor is then responsible for scheduling an in-person intake session with the provider and the student's guardian. Increasing access to mental health services is in line with the community schools model and the district's efforts to tend to the needs of the whole child.

Southside Community Social Attracts 300 People

Southside K-8 School held its annual School and Community Social Aug. 11. The event was attended by students and their families and was open to all McDowell community residents. The attendees received information about the services provided by community organizations and businesses, such as Smiles Mobile

Dentistry Program; UniCare; WV Birth to Three, which provides early intervention services; West Virginia University's Health Sciences Center; and Project AWARE. Reconnecting McDowell staff distributed booklets that give parents information and tips on helping their children succeed academically, such as the "Helping

Your Child" series, which includes "Learn Responsible Behavior," "Learn Science" and "Become a Reader." They also gave out fans to help attendees beat the heat. Southside holds the event every year to give students and families an opportunity to meet their new teachers, as well as to engage community residents.

District Provides Support for Grandparents

The next meeting of the Second Time Around Grandparents Club will be held Oct. 28 at 10:30 a.m. at Goodson's Supermarket in Welch. The club meetings provide support for grandparents who are the primary caretakers for their grandchildren. Attendees are able to discuss the challenges they face and share resources and advice with each other.

The meetings, which are organized by McDowell County Schools, provide on-site support for curriculum ques-

tions, technology sessions and more.

The October meeting will include a "Smart Shoppers Grocery Tour," at which participants will receive recipes and tips on how to make healthy food choices. The school district worked with WVU Extension Service to organize the tour. For more information, contact Amanda Fragile, Title I director, at afragile@k12.wv.us or call 304-436-8441, ext. 250.

Family Advisory Council Meetings

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.

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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 Kris Mallory, kmallory@aftwv.org, or Debra Elmore at delmore@aftwv.org or 304-552-5766.

