

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.

Grant Money Available for Laid-Off McDowell Miners to Take Classes

The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Career Centers recently received a \$1.7 million grant from the federal Department of Labor through the West Virginia Department of Commerce's WorkForce West Virginia system to provide some laid-off coal miners up to \$5,000 to attend a state-approved retraining program.

There are currently more than 50 enrollees from all over West Virginia, including from Clay, Mingo and Wyoming counties, however none are from McDowell, and funding is available for 80 more. Enrollees can take classes at community and technical colleges such as Bridgemont, New River or Southern West Virginia. While the most popular program has been the commercial driver's license training, enrollees have also taken courses in welding, HVAC,

diesel mechanics, computers and even drug counseling.

"We encourage miners to enroll in a program that will add new skills to their resume, even if they plan on returning to coal mining," said Brett Dillon, director of the UMWA Career Center in Beckley, W.Va. "For example, one miner received his commercial driver's license through the program and is now driving a coal truck."

To be eligible, you must have been laid off as of March 1, 2012, and have been given a WARN (Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification) Act notice. Also, the retraining program must be completed by June 1, 2014. You can receive more information at the WorkForce West Virginia office in Welch, or contact the UMWA Career Centers directly at 304-253-3610.



Check out the Reconnecting McDowell public service announcements running on many popular cable stations such as ESPN, CNN and HGTV in several West Virginia counties thanks to Reconnecting McDowell partner Shentel Communications. You can also see them on the Reconnecting McDowell website.

McDowell Native Named to National Student Leadership Academy

Ronald "Trey" Lockhart has been selected to participate in the inaugural GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy, a 12-month national leadership program providing students across the



country with intensive training in civic engagement and community development. Lockhart, a native of McDowell County, was selected from a nationwide pool of applicants made up of students who have graduated from high schools served by the federal GEAR UP program. GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) works to prepare students from high-need areas to enter and succeed in post-secondary education programs.

Lockhart will travel to Washington, D.C., where he will join the 29 other students forming the academy's

inaugural class for a weeklong training program. The program will teach students skills such as social media advocacy, grass-roots civic engagement, and organizational leadership. Lockhart and other participants in the academy will then return home to work with local GEAR UP staff members to increase community engagement, awareness and support for issues related to college access and success.

Lockhart is a 2012 graduate of River View High School in McDowell County. He is currently pursuing a degree in pre-medicine at Concord University, where he is a member of the Bonner Scholars program. GEAR UP staff members based at Concord University nominated Lockhart for the academy because of his dedication to community service and his leadership role with the Reconnecting McDowell initiative.

"It is an honor to support McDowell County and the rest of West Virginia as I go through this program," said Lockhart. "I feel that the work I will be

doing is important because growing up in a rural community, I have seen many people who have not gone on to college or a trade program. I want to show today's students that there are programs out there they can enroll in after high school to advance their education and get a job."

Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin commended Lockhart's accomplishments and his commitment to education.

"I am incredibly proud that a West Virginia student is included within the inaugural class of the national GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy," said Gov. Tomblin. "Education is a top priority for the Mountain State, and the GEAR UP program has made tremendous strides in advancing the postsecondary educational opportunities of students throughout southern and central West Virginia. I know Mr. Lockhart will represent our state well, and I am encouraged and inspired by his willingness to serve as a voice for his peers in working to advance educational achievement."

AFT-Kanawha Donates \$2,000 to Volunteer Fire Department for Protective Gear

The War Volunteer Fire Department has a long and proud history of protecting the citizens of War, W.Va. The volunteer firefighters also have been active role models for War students for many years, including participating in a mentoring program with elementary students and running a junior firefighter program at Big Creek High School before it closed in 2008. Flo McGuire, principal of Southside K-8 in War, is reviving the firefighter mentoring program for her students.

"Boosting attendance and graduation rates is one of the biggest challenges we face in McDowell," said McGuire. "When I looked at the data, every single student who participated in the firefighter mentoring program stayed in school and graduated from high school. And I think it is because they found a family, found a purpose though the program."

McGuire restarted the mentoring program on March 1, and Southside is



holding a Fire Safety Week the first week of May for the students to learn fire safety habits and interact with the firefighters.

As a way to thank the War Volunteer Fire Department for its longtime community involvement, AFT-Kanawha, a local AFT affiliate, has donated more than \$2,000 to replace one set of personal protective equipment for the department. The department desperately needs 10 more sets of personal protective equipment for its volunteers. The current equipment is unsafe due to the age and condition of the gear, and some firefighters do not have any at all.

AFT-Kanawha is challenging other AFT locals, other unions and Reconnecting McDowell supporters to raise money for the remaining sets of protective equipment. For more information about making a donation, contact Southside K-8 principal Flo McGuire at frchrist@access.k12.wv.us.

VOICES FROM McDOWELL

"The key word is hope, and that is what Reconnecting McDowell is giving our students. Thank you for helping us to give our young people a future in our county."

— **Jim Redmond**, a McDowell County resident who attended the Reconnecting McDowell partners meeting on April 22.

Pictured left to right: AFT president Randi Weingarten, Debbie and Jim Redmond, Reconnecting McDowell board of directors chair Gayle Manchin, AFT-West Virginia president Christine Campbell and Jak Kincaid, project coordinator for the Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia.



Grant Writing Workshop—June 5

Want to learn more about grants available for small businesses; civic, health and community development organizations; students and educators; entrepreneurs; and more?

Grant Writing Workshop
June 5, 2013
1-4:30 p.m.

WorkForce West Virginia
110 Park Ave.
Suite 100
Welch, WV

Reserve your space today.
Please sign up by e-mailing
3DA@rcbi.org.

This workshop is presented as part of the Third District Accelerator, a new program to create business opportunities, strengthen entrepreneurship and generate jobs. The Third District Accelerator is funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Appalachian Regional Commission, and is administered through a partnership of TechConnect West Virginia and the Robert C. Byrd Institute. Partners include Marshall University, Concord University and the Natural Capital Investment Fund.

For a list of Reconnecting McDowell partners, visit <http://www.reconnectingmcdowell.org/>

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.