

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 Visit Charleston

Twenty-three students from River View and Mount View high schools participated in the Broader Horizons mentorship program's trip to Charleston on Jan. 10-14. The mentees started the week with a leadership development session led by Christine Campbell, president of AFT-West Virginia. Campbell shared with the students how she became the president of a state federation despite her humble beginnings. Students discussed the qualities they believe make for a good leader and the different ways in which they are leading in their community and schools. AFT staff members Lauren Samet and Julie Washington led two sessions on communications. They trained students on the best ways to deliver an impromptu and an informational speech, as well as on other effective communication strategies—both verbal and nonverbal. Mentees were challenged to write a short speech about their hero; many chose to speak about their parents, other family members or a teacher who inspires them. The speeches were sincere, eloquent and full of personality—often leaving many in the room in tears or laughing. Several students admitted that the communications sessions made them nervous, but in the end they enjoyed them. Nadia Johnson of Mount View High school said, "It's been a learning experience for me to better myself" while Joseph Hayes noted that the trainings made him feel more confident for an upcoming interview.



- ▲ **Dr. T. Ramon Stuart, associate provost and associate vice president for academic affairs at West Virginia State University, welcomes the students to the campus. Stuart—a native of McDowell County—encouraged them to think beyond the negative stereotypes often imposed on McDowell County.**



- ▲ **Broader Horizons participants and their tour guide discuss the amenities and facilities that would be available to them as students at West Virginia State University.**



- ▲ **Students visit the Advanced Technology Center to shadow workers on the job. The trip was followed by visits to law offices, Health Rite, Appalachian Power and other sites that reflected their career interests.**



▲ Sarah Hardee, left, and Carah Simpson enjoying dinner at the Tidewater Grill.



▲ Mentee Kelsie Potter speaks to the West Virginia Board of Education. She shared her vision for McDowell County and the work she is doing with other Mount View High School students to have a youth recreation center opened in the County.



▲ Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin invited the Broader Horizons mentees to participate in a press conference on education.



▲ Federal Judge Irene Berger, a McDowell County native, talks with the students about her professional journey and how her humble beginnings made her focused and determined to achieve her goals, which ultimately contributed to her success.

Handle with Care Program Implemented in McDowell

The West Virginia Defending Childhood Initiative, commonly referred to as Handle with Care, has been implemented in McDowell County. The program was established to address the special needs of students who have witnessed a crime, violence or been subjected to a traumatic experience. The initiative allows police who have been called to a scene where a child is present to alert the school of the child's involvement. No details are shared with the school; the notification simply

provides the student's name along with the message "handle with care." Educators are then able to adjust to the student's needs by taking a variety of steps, such as allowing the child to rest, retake a test or to refer the student to a school counselor. Going through a traumatic experience can limit a student's ability to focus, excel academically and can lead to truancy, school failure or being caught up in the juvenile justice system. The program not only facilitates communication

between law enforcement and school personnel to provide students the support they need and help to reduce the negative effects of trauma, it also increases school and community partnerships to provide wraparound services and effective interventions. The program was launched on Dec. 10 in Welch where teachers were trained. It has since been fully implemented throughout the County.

The Red Cross Trains Students on Disaster Preparedness

The Pillowcase Project, a great program implemented by the American Red Cross was inspired by students who used pillowcases to carry their belongings in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The project was developed for students in grades 3-5 to train them on disaster preparedness. McDowell County students were educated on the program by representatives of the West Virginia Red Cross, who discussed what was needed to prepare for various natural disasters and other emergencies. The students decorated their pillowcases, learned about other items needed for disaster preparedness and practiced the necessary steps to ensure their safety in emergencies.



◀ **A student decorates his pillowcase during the West Virginia Red Cross' training for the Pillowcase Project.**




Save the Dates

- ▶ The McDowell County school district's Early Childhood Fair will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on April 15 at the Welch National Guard Armory. Children will be able to enjoy face painting, a minibike course, science experiments and free books. Information and resources for parents will be available. Contact Amanda Fragile at afragile@k12.wv.us if you're interested in having a table at the fair.
- ▶ The McDowell County Career and Technology Center's licensed practical nurse pre-entry exams have been scheduled for Mar. 1, 3, 8, 10, 15, 17, 22 and 24. All tests are from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and will be held at the center. Pre-registration and payment of a \$50 test fee are required and should be completed at the center. Call 304-436-6180 for more information.

Reconnecting McDowell Partners Meeting

The next Reconnecting McDowell partners meeting will be held March 29-30 in Charleston. Look for a formal invitation in the coming weeks that will include more details.

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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.