

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.

McDowell Makes Good Health a Family Affair with Fitness Challenge

McDowell Choices offers programs that encourage healthy lifestyles for County residents and improve and create opportunities for physical activity in school and family settings. McDowell Choices held a six-week Fit Family Challenge that kicked off on Aug. 26 at River View High School. Families were able to register online for free and at a 5-K race that was organized by the school district.

Weekly Fit Family Challenge newsletters featured upcoming events, tips on stress management and how to find a good balance that will encourage long-term lifestyle changes, among other helpful topics. The challenge offered free classes, such as Zumba, open gym and group activities where competitors could work out together. Participants could use an online activity tracker to log exercise and maintain a food journal; weekly prizes were awarded based on points earned from increased physical activity. Random drawings were

made to determine the winners—the more points participants earned, the greater their chances of winning. Reconnecting McDowell donated six \$25 gift cards that were used for prizes. The grand-prize winner was randomly selected at the end of the challenge and received an all-expenses-paid trip to the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

There were 281 participants—185 people from the Mount View side, who logged 132,073 minutes of

physical activity and 96 from the River View side, who logged 57,271 minutes. Healthy tips and activities are available all year at [www.](http://www.MyFitFamilyChallenge.com)

MyFitFamilyChallenge.com, where participants can continue tracking their exercise and adopting healthier lifestyles. The Fit Family Challenge was organized by the West Virginia University College of Physical Activity and Sport Sciences and the McDowell CHOICES Project. Coca-Cola sponsored the challenge.



◀ **The Fit Family Challenge activities encouraged family time and made exercise enjoyable for children and their parents.**



Reconnecting McDowell Receives \$150,000 Federal Grant

The Appalachian Regional Commission awarded Reconnecting McDowell a \$150,000 grant to help with an economic development plan for the County. One-third of the grant award will go toward finalizing the financial package for construction of Renaissance Village—the apartment building that will provide housing for County residents and teachers. The housing project is a part of Reconnecting McDowell's efforts to improve teacher retention and to attract new teachers, as well as other professionals, to the area. The building site has been cleared, and construction bids are pending.

Reconnecting McDowell also will utilize the grant funding to work with a consulting firm on an economic development plan for the County. "We have made real progress in McDowell County's public schools since the Reconnecting McDowell partnership began, but economic development in the County is key to sustained progress. The various partners involved are committed to thinking outside the box to help bring about a vibrant, stable economy that gets people back to work," says Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers.

Rural Education Conference Informs Reconnecting McDowell's Work

On Oct. 13-14, Reconnecting McDowell staff members Debra Elmore and Kris Mallory attended the Rural Education National Forum held at Ohio State University in Columbus. The theme was "STRONGER TOGETHER: Connecting and Collaborating for Rural Prosperity"; Battelle for Kids and the National

Rural Education Association hosted the forum. The two staff members attended a variety of sessions and keynote addresses to better their understanding of where McDowell County stands in comparison with other rural areas nationwide, and to learn about solutions to problems that many rural communities face.

Elmore attended the "Impacting Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Rural Colorado" session to learn how other communities grapple with the problem of retaining teachers. U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. was a featured speaker at the conference.

School District Holds a College Fair

The McDowell County Schools organized a college fair held on Sept. 19. The event attracted more than 150 students and their families. Students were able to speak with counselors from more than 30 colleges to learn about each school's academic programs, financial aid options and student life on campus. Students from the Broader Horizons mentorship program who are in their senior year of high school attended the fair and met with Debra Elmore, who is the community liaison for Reconnecting McDowell. The school district is now planning a career fair.



◀ Selena Collins talks with a representative about the programs available at his university.

▲ Broader Horizon student Makayla Saunders, wearing blue, receives school gear from a university representative at the college fair.

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

Upcoming Events

- The West Virginia University Extension Service is holding monthly workshops that will teach participants life skills. Workshops are geared for 9- to 18-year-olds and will cover sewing, archery, first aid and gardening, among other skills. A beginner's sewing workshop will be held at 10 a.m. on Nov. 12 in the Payne Building community room in Welch. For more information, or to register, call the WVU Extension Service at 304-436-9006. Registration is required, and parents are encouraged to attend along with their children.

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

