

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 Making Strides in McDowell

McDowell County Schools has been working with Reconnecting McDowell for the past two years to implement community schools in the County. On May 22, Reconnecting McDowell board members (including AFT President Randi Weingarten) and staff toured Southside K-8 School, a community school, with Cheryl Cruey, assistant principal and supervisor of curriculum and instruction, and Sarah Muncy, community school coordinator.

During the visit, dental hygienists from Smiles Mobile Dentistry spoke about their experience working with students and the services they offer. A mobile unit visits the school twice a year to give students free cleanings and restorative services. This school year, Smiles has seen 102 patients and completed 253 dental procedures.

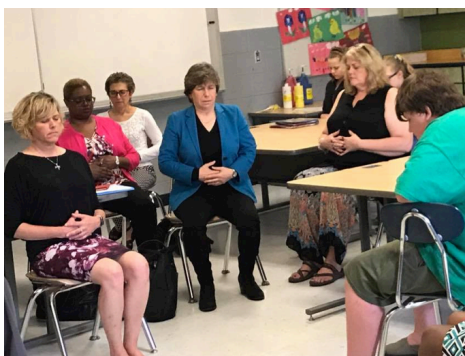
Southside and its community school partners hold various events at the Big Creek gymnasium, which is open to students and community residents. The

activities—aimed at promoting physical and mental wellness as well as family involvement—have included Zumba classes and movie nights. Additionally, housed on the top floor is a state-of-the-art gym that is used by students and residents alike. The gym is open to community residents Monday through Thursday, 5-8 p.m.

Southside K-8 thrives as a hub, connector and resource for the War area, with Reconnecting McDowell

continuing to provide support to its staff. The recent tour reconfirmed the project's fundamental belief that McDowell students are as smart and capable as other students, and it is through the wraparound services the school provides that they're able to unlock and realize their potential. As site coordinator, Muncy helps obtain and coordinate the services of partners that make community schools such an integral part of the County.

Southside's services are made possible by federal and state funds and support from dedicated partners, organizations and individuals. If you'd like to make a monetary or in-kind contribution, contact Sarah Muncy at sarah.muncy@k12.wv.us.



◀ **Reconnecting McDowell board members and staff participate in an after-school gentle yoga class that West Virginia University Extension offers third-graders at Southside.**



Second-graders in the Southside after-school robotics program show off their skills for AFT President Randi Weingarten. This school year, six students participated in the program, which was funded by an Innovation Zone grant that Reconnecting McDowell applied for with Southside staff.

McDowell Receives Grant for Job-Training Project

McDowell County was one of the recipients of an Appalachian Hatchery project grant at an award ceremony held at the Robert C. Byrd Institute (RCBI) in Huntington on April 20. Reconnecting McDowell worked with RCBI for almost two years on the grant application, signed on as a partner and provided a letter of support. The grants, which are aimed at creating jobs in coal-impacted communities, total over \$6 million and were awarded by the Appalachian Regional Commission, the U.S. Economic Development Administration and the Claude

Worthington Benedum Foundation. The funds will be used to provide McDowell residents with workforce training in industries such as healthcare, manufacturing and agriculture. The training will serve 10-12 former coal miners per semester and is expected to be implemented this fall.

The grant will also give direct assistance to businesses and organizations, including the McDowell County Career and Technical Center, by providing machine retooling and prototype development.

Reconnecting McDowell Partners Meet

The board of directors and partners of Reconnecting McDowell met for two days at Twin Falls Resort State Park May 22-23. Partners from a variety of sectors and focus areas convened to discuss local, state and national efforts to advance McDowell County.

McDowell County Schools staff provided education updates, including improved test scores and graduation rates despite a 124-student enrollment decline. The district staff shared concerns about their ability to continue much-needed after-school programs if proposed cuts in federal funding for Title I and 21st Century Learning Centers grants come to pass; the partners then discussed ideas that would mitigate the impact of these cuts.

Results of their brainstorming: the Five Loaves and Two Fishes Food Bank, AFT McDowell and the Federal Correctional Institution, McDowell, committed to supporting the schools' backpack program (which provides food to students) by volunteering and donating food. Professors from Marshall University volunteered to mentor students in Reconnecting McDowell's Broader Horizons program.

Kris Mallory, project coordinator for Reconnecting McDowell, provided an overview of the current economy in the County, which helped frame further discussions on economic development. Robert C. Byrd Institute representative Bill Woodrum, and Jina Belcher from Coalfield Development Corporation, provided updates on training and retraining opportunities in the County, including a \$6 million grant (see story at top left) awarded to coal-impacted communities; McDowell County received funding from this grant.

The partners will meet again this fall.

Reconnecting McDowell to Continue Broader Horizons Program

Reconnecting McDowell has received \$200,000 from the AT&T Foundation to support two more years of the Broader Horizons mentorship program. The program was implemented in 2013, through a \$300,000 grant from the foundation. In the past three years, Broader Horizons has provided mentoring to 58 high school juniors from McDowell County. Guidance counselors from Mount View and River View high schools selected the students, who were then paired with a

Broader Horizons mentor. They received training in career and professional skills, such as public speaking; effective networking tips; and guidance on how to complete strong college and financial aid applications. The program included two weeklong trips, to Charleston and Washington, D.C., that featured culturally enriching activities and visits to state representatives.

Reconnecting McDowell is proud to partner with the AT&T Foundation to mentor McDowell students.



Snapshot

McDowell County Schools' 2017 Early Childhood Fair

Community liaison Debra Elmore, left, attended the annual Early Childhood Fair, held April 28 at the Welch National Guard Armory and organized by McDowell County Schools; Reconnecting McDowell was a partner in the event. More than 100 children and families attended.

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For a list of Reconnecting McDowell partners, visit www.ReconnectingMcDowell.org/partners

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.

