

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.

Steelworkers support McDowell families

Women of Steel, the mentorship and leadership development arm of the United Steelworkers, believes in the power and importance of community service. As Women of Steel coordinator Karen Shipley puts it: “Amazing things can happen when people come together.”

It is no surprise then that Women of Steel supports McDowell County programs, with the backing of USW District 8 director Ernest R. Thompson. Women of Steel members recently pooled together money to purchase 25 backpacks and school and home supplies for children, college students and seniors living in the area. And the group played an important role in reviving the greenhouse at Sandy River Middle School.

During a 2013 meeting, David Williams, of the McDowell County Board of Education, asked West Virginia University Extension Service agent Donald Reed to take control of the greenhouse and use it for 4-H agricultural education. The greenhouse had not been

used in years, and the roof had been damaged by a major storm.

At first, Reed was not sure where to begin, so he worked with Women of Steel to secure funding to replace the roofing panels. They raised \$800 to fix the roof and restore functionality to the greenhouse. Since that time, the WVU Extension Service Family Nutrition Program has provided funds for soil, plants, seeds, gravel and containers. Reed notes that the greenhouse is a labor of love and involves many community partners.

After a few years of trial and error, the greenhouse is now fully functional, with an added outdoor growing space, and its produce has been sent to the McDowell County HOPE (Health Opportunities for Positive Education) Coalition. The HOPE Coalition, with funding from Marshall University’s Diabetes

Control Program, uses the fresh produce (along with produce from Roadside Farms) in its Pharmacy Project, which provides fresh vegetables to those with chronic disease.

Science teachers Sherry Woolridge and Amanda Lester use the greenhouse with their classes. They use the National 4-H Gardening Curriculum and worked with 4-H to implement a container gardening education project, which all eighth-graders participate in.

“Women of Steel has long been supporters of all 4-H projects in McDowell County,” Reed says. “Members always call to ask what the local needs are each year, and then they start raising funds. They have provided residential camp scholarships, state camp scholarships and funding for repairs to the greenhouse.”

Thank you, Women of Steel!

▼ **Thanks to the Sandy River Middle School greenhouse, which was renovated with funding secured by Women of Steel, students learn about agriculture hands-on.**



Mentorship program enters fourth year



▲ Broader Horizons mentees on orientation day.

The Broader Horizons mentorship program welcomed its newest cohort with an orientation on Oct. 30 at the Phoenix Center in Welch. The program, which is funded by AT&T, enters its fourth year with 20 students—10 juniors from River View High School and 10 juniors from Mount View High School. The newest mentees and their families were given an overview of the program, the monthly meetings and the two weeklong trips to Charleston and Washington, D.C. The first trip will be held the second week of January.

Family Advisory Council

The next Family Advisory Council meeting will be held on Monday, Nov. 27, 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Phoenix Center in Welch. The monthly meetings are organized by McDowell County Schools and are open to all families and community members. Lunch will be served. For more information, contact Amanda Fragile at afragile@k12.wv.us or 304-436-8441, ext. 250.

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 Chad Webb (cwebb@aftwv.org) or Debra Elmore (delmore@aftwv.org or 304-552-5766).



WE NEED YOUR VOICE!

Reconnecting McDowell is looking for educators, school staff, volunteers, partners and community members to share their stories on AFT Voices (<https://aftvoices.org>), the AFT's activist-driven blog. If you're interested in sharing the story of your work in McDowell County, please contact Leilah Mooney Joseph in the AFT communications department at ljoseph@aft.org.

Let's Connect

Follow Reconnecting McDowell on social media to receive the latest updates and news. We share information on webinars, job-training opportunities and upcoming community events. We also highlight our partners and their work in McDowell County and the state.

Social Media

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