

## 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](http://www.ReconnectingMcDowell.org).

## Charleston Broadens McDowell Students' Horizons

AT&T Foundation has awarded Reconnecting McDowell \$200,000 to continue the foundation's support of the Broader Horizons mentorship program. As in years past, juniors from Mount View and River View high schools were taken on a visit to Charleston on Jan. 8-11. This year's cohort was made up of 10 students from each high school.

The students took part in activities such as a policy workshop featuring a tour of the state Capitol, communications training, a tour of West Virginia State University, and shadowing workers on the job. The kids participated in two workshops where they got tips on effective public speaking and were charged with preparing and delivering a speech in front of their peers. Seen as the most frightening and dreaded activity on day one, by the end of the week students said it was their favorite part of the trip.

Students in the cohort were able to shadow professionals and experience a day in the life of someone working in their desired career fields, including lawyers and veterinarians. During these

visits, students learned about all aspects of the career, from the prerequisites for successfully getting into undergraduate and graduate programs to what goes into owning a business.

An integral part of the program is the support students receive from the Broader Horizons mentors as well as Reconnecting McDowell staff. Students are matched with mentors based on their personal and career interests. All mentors must pass a background check and go through a mentor orientation, which is followed by a dinner during the mentees' Charleston trip.

Students will attend monthly meetings for the duration of the program as well as follow the curriculum laid out for the year. They also will work on a project that focuses on the ethnography of McDowell County. The mentees will present their projects during a trip they will take to Washington, D.C., later in the year.

**The aspiring veterinarians among the Broader Horizons students watch an operation on a cat.**



## PARTNERS MEET IN CHARLESTON

Reconnecting McDowell partners convened in Charleston Jan. 8-9 for their semiannual meeting. The event coincided with the Broader Horizons Charleston trip, which allowed partners to meet mentees and to learn about their individual interests and hear their stories at a dinner on the first day.

The next day was a full-day working session. McDowell County School Superintendent Nelson Spencer and his staff gave reports on several initiatives that have been successful in the County, including the teacher home visiting program and book distributions from Voya. Partners also watched a nationally distributed short feature from NBC's "Today" Show (<http://bit.ly/destinyr>) featuring Broader Horizons alum Destiny Robertson.

The partners then convened in work groups to reflect on what Reconnecting McDowell has accomplished and the impact this work has had in moving the needle toward educational and economic improvement in the County. The work groups for instruction, economic development, and wraparound services discussed and strategized around six-month and one- and two-year goals.

For a list of Reconnecting McDowell partners, visit [www.ReconnectingMcDowell.org/partners](http://www.ReconnectingMcDowell.org/partners).

# Reconnecting McDowell Partner Spotlight: KVC West Virginia

When a child has been abused or neglected, or when a family is facing a mental health challenge, KVC West Virginia provides the support needed during difficult times.

KVC West Virginia is a private, non-profit child-welfare organization that provides an array of services, including foster care, adoption, in-home family preservation services, and outpatient psychiatric and behavioral healthcare. The organization has deep roots in West Virginia, going as far back as 1970. It works closely with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources and other organizations to develop community-based services for the betterment of children and families. KVC is a state-licensed child placement agency and behavioral healthcare provider in 26 counties for children in state custody. KVC has nine office locations and employs 130 case managers, therapists, and other highly trained and experienced staff. They work in several of the local schools providing school-based therapy as well as providing home-based therapy as needed.

## Foster homes are needed

Eleven families have expressed interest in fostering in McDowell, but there currently are no open homes and none in process. This is mainly due to families being unable to complete the required

training. KVC has only one home finder, who provides the training and covers at least six counties. "People get frustrated at the amount of time it takes to get certified to foster," says Paul Orten, community resource specialist at KVC West Virginia. "We ask that people be patient; the process can seem overwhelming at times, but it is worth it in the end. The blessing comes to not only the foster child but also to the family who has opened their home."

Many children awaiting adoptive families were removed from their biological families due to abuse, neglect or abandonment. These children have endured hardships, sadness, and loss of relationships. Without a permanent, loving adoptive home, they face the likelihood of entering adulthood with no parental guidance or support. KVC believes that all children deserve loving, safe homes and works hard to find them. Many other children in West Virginia awaiting adoption are considered to have special needs. Some of these children may have a physical, emotional or educational challenge, but many are healthy and doing well developmentally.

If you would like to become a foster or adoptive family, call 800-835-5277 or visit [www.kvcwv.org](http://www.kvcwv.org). For the full list of requirements to become a foster or adoptive family, visit <http://bit.ly/KVCWV>.



## IN MEMORY OF A DEDICATED COMMUNITY ADVOCATE

Gov. Jim Justice requested that West Virginia state flags on state-owned facilities at the Capitol Complex and throughout McDowell County be flown at half-staff in memory of Emily Yeager, who died Jan. 20 at age 86. She served for years as a council member for the City of Welch, a Democratic member of the House of Delegates, and as a Reconnecting McDowell board member. Emily Yeager is survived by three children, eight grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. Reconnecting McDowell extends its deepest condolences to her family and friends.

## 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

 Follow us on Twitter:  
[@ReconnectMcD](https://twitter.com/ReconnectMcD)

 Follow us on Instagram:  
[@ReconnectMcD](https://www.instagram.com/ReconnectMcD)

 Like us on Facebook:  
[facebook.com/ReconnectMcD](https://www.facebook.com/ReconnectMcD)

## 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](mailto:cwebb@aftwv.org)) or Debra Elmore ([delmore@aftwv.org](mailto:delmore@aftwv.org) or 304-552-5766).

