

West Virginia GED distinguished achievement award

By Debra Kimbler, West Virginia GED Administrator

Marilyn Pettit, nurse and business woman, was awarded the 2006 West Virginia GED Distinguished Achievement Award. The award is annually given to a West Virginia citizen that is a General Educational Development (GED) graduate who has utilized the GED diploma as a tool for success by making outstanding contributions to society in education, justice, health, public service, or social welfare.

Ms. Pettit spoke to a room of approximately 150 GED Examiners and guests, which included her husband and several friends, at the Canaan Valley Resort. She reminded the audience about just how much passing the GED Tests can shape lives. It opens the door to a better future. It makes no difference why you dropped out of school in the first place; what matters is that you have made the decision to take corrective action. The following is Marilyn Pettit's moving description of how the GED changed her life:

"I opened the door to a better future for myself many years ago. My husband and I got married when we were still teenagers; I was sixteen, and he seventeen. We had three children by the time I was twenty. Back at that time, expectant mothers were very unusual in high school, and I felt isolated so I dropped out of classes in my junior year. I planned to finish my schooling the next year, but by that time I was pregnant again! I never went back. Consequently, I always felt unfinished and inadequate. Over the years I kept telling myself that one day I'd go back to school and complete my education, but one day turned into the next, and I was still a dropout after fifteen years.

When the girls started elementary school, I got a Christmas-time job at a retail store earning minimum wage. There I encountered

single mothers who were struggling to support their families on that same wage. Many were working two and three jobs, and they were still barely scratching by. That experience made me painfully aware that if our family's livelihood depended upon me, we'd starve. If my husband were to become ill or die, I couldn't earn enough to feed my children and myself.

It created an anxious, unsettled feeling in me - a bit like having a grain of sand in my shoe. I couldn't rest

Continued on page 3



Debra Kimbler, WV GED Administrator and Marilyn Pettit, GED Distinguished Achievement Award winner.

Inside this issue

Marines help Braxton County	4
ESCAPE! first-responder training	6 - 7
Student of Year on WSAZ-TV Cover Story	9
Meet the staff of Literacy West Virginia	12
e-Learning experience	14 - 15
RESA I and RESA VI share Christmas	17, 20 - 21
The faces of the WV Adult Ed Hotline	18 - 19

What do Randolph Mantooth, star of long-running TV show, *Emergency*; Chief Richard Picciotto who was the last rescuer to make it out of the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001; and Phil Pfister, the world's strongest man and Charleston, WV firefighter, have in common? They all gave words of encouragement to adult students throughout West Virginia. Check-out these articles on pages 4, 6, and 7.

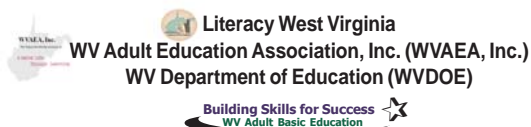
And are you thinking about Christmas? How about Christmas in April? On pages 17 and 20 of this issue are two stories about how Regional Education Service Agencies I and VI shared their "gifts" with others during the 2006 Christmas season. These articles can give you ideas for this year; or even spark interest for a special summer project.

Information about upcoming conferences, state and national GED award winners, e-Learning experiences, and SPOKES program activities are jam-packed into this first-ever 24-page issue! Thanks to all of you who submitted these great stories!

So now, find a comfortable spot, get a cool glass of lemonade, and take time away from your hectic schedule to enjoy this spring 2007 issue of *Networks*! ■

Kathy

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Kathy Hollingsworth, Editor-in-Chief
Design and Layout
kwinter@access.k12.wv.us

Pam Bryan, Content Editor
pbryan@access.k12.wv.us

Ellen Killion, Copy Editor
ekillion@access.k12.wv.us

WV Adult Education Hotline (800) 642-2670
<http://www.wvabe.org>
<http://www.wvaea.org>

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Distance education program receives grant

A⁺ ADVANTAGE GED

By Pam Bryan, Distance Education Cyber-Teacher, and Ellen Killion, ABE Specialist

The West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.) has awarded two grants for a total of \$500 to the distance education program to be used for purchasing incentives for students.

Getting students to return to the adult learning center for reassessment is an ongoing problem within adult education. Since distance education students are studying online from home and have no one-on-one contact with their instructor, this becomes an even greater problem. As a result, we at the distance education office have been brainstorming ways to motivate our distance education students, not only to go back for reassessment, but also to meet their monthly goal of 40 hours of online study. And thanks to WVAEA, Inc., we will be able to purchase some incentives to help motivate our students!

Under the first grant, students will receive a \$10 gift card to be used for gas (or other purchases) after they have studied online for at least 50 hours and returned to the classroom for their interim assessment. We hope to show an increase in our performance levels as a result of this incentive plan.

The second grant will be used to purchase small gifts for students who show significant progress, consistently meet the 40 hour per month study requirement, and who pass the General Educational Development (GED) Tests. Students who meet the 40 hour requirement or who show significant progress will receive a small incentive (such as a pen, highlighter, calculator, monthly planner, notepad, etc.) each month along with a certificate. Students who pass the GED will receive a "graduation package," which will contain a variety of items that can be used in an office or school setting.

In addition to the monthly incentives and the \$10 gift card for those who go back for

Continued on page 11

Distinguished achievement award . . .

Continued from front page

until I had solved the problem. It nudged me to begin thinking about what I should be doing to make my situation more secure. I began to roll ideas over in my mind in search of a solution. I had always wanted to be a nurse, but because I'd married so young and had family obligations, I'd put that dream in mothballs years ago. Now, that fantasy began to bubble to the surface again.

One evening I was watching a TV program, one of those medical dramas, when it hit me! I've always wanted to be a nurse, I STILL want to be a nurse, and I'm willing to do what it takes to become one! I made my choice right then! From that point, I was focused upon one goal: I AM GOING TO BE A NURSE! I'll do whatever it takes!

My dad's words came back to me. He had always told my sister and me, "You can do anything, be anything; all you have to do is focus upon a goal and then maintain that focus!" I'd hear those words many times over the years, but they were just that – words. Now all of a sudden they began to make sense. Once I'd made up my mind, my next step was to begin making some decisions and setting priorities. The first step was to take stock of the gaps in my education and remedy the situation. An obvious deficit was my high school diploma.

My life and the lives of my family became much regimented. On Saturdays the girls and I cleaned the house, did the laundry, and cooked for the coming week. Sundays were set aside for studying and writing papers. There was no Microsoft Word back then, and I couldn't type, so I'd stand over my husband's shoulder and dictate. We spent many Sundays that way.

At long last my hard work paid off. I graduated in 1976, and then I passed my State Boards. It was a dream come true! I was finally a Registered Nurse! I was so proud of myself, and I still am! I'd be there still, but my husband had a dream too; and his dream caused a change of direction in mine!

My husband's dream was to own his own business, be his own boss. But he'd been so busy supporting a family that that's all it was - a dream.

After I started working at the hospital, he started to change his thinking from, "I wish I owned my own business;" to "I'm going to own my own business!" He was the one now focused!

In order to start the ball rolling, I studied for and then passed my GED Tests. I was on my way! Next, I set up an interview with the chair of the nursing department at West Virginia University - Parkersburg. I filled out all the necessary forms, took the ACT Test and was accepted. I was thrilled! NOW anxiety began to seep into my mind. I would be going to class with people much younger than I. They would be highly motivated, and their study skills wouldn't be rusty from fifteen years of neglect. I didn't need to worry because maturity, coupled with focus and determination, made up for rusty study skills. I worked very hard to get the most from my education.

Because the GED had opened the medical doors to my career, I was able to support the family while my husband forged ahead to his goal. His unwavering determination finally paid off. Today da Vinci's has a seating capacity of 375, employs 80 people, serves top quality food, and has an excellent reputation in the community."

In addition to being a nurse and business woman, Ms. Pettit is active in the local Toastmasters Club, National Association Parliamentarians, and the Parkersburg Woman's Club, having served as a past-president of each. She serves both on the board of directors of the West Virginia University-Parkersburg Foundation and Artsbridge. Currently pursuing a board of regents degree, she is dedicated to continuing her education through any means, either self-study or formal class setting. Marilyn's motto is – *Knowledge is Power.*

Marilyn and her husband, Jim, reside in Parkersburg with their three daughters. They own and manage da Vinci's Italian Restaurant in Williamstown.

If you would like to nominate a GED graduate for the 2007 West Virginia GED Distinguished Achievement Award, please contact Debra Kimbler, State GED Administrator, at (304) 558-6315 or dkimbler@access.k12.wv.us . ■

Braxton County gets help from marine friends

By Amy Curtis, Adult Basic Education Instructor

Through some creative thinking on the part of their instructor, Amy Curtis, the adult basic education (ABE) class in Sutton, WV recently received eight new computers. Mrs. Curtis had been frustrated and concerned with the lack of good computers for the ABE class. She took pictures of the former computer lab and attached them to an email, explaining that the ABE class enrollment had increased in Braxton County due to students using the Internet for accessing PLATO and to prepare for their GED (General Educational Development).

The email went out to her husband, Dr. Mark Curtis, and to family and friends. Dr. Curtis, a former Marine capitalized on the fact that his wife was also a former Marine, and forwarded the email to individuals in his email address book. This resulted in several hundred dollars from their friends and former Marines.



Amy's mother and step-father, who had been in the ministry for several years, also forwarded the email to many of their friends. As a result, several hundred dollars for computers came in through various churches and Christian friends. The emails literally traveled from coast to coast across the United States. The end result is the beautiful new computer lab displayed in the picture!!!! Not only did the ABE class receive new computers, but Carolyn Long, superintendent of Braxton County Schools, graciously provided two new classrooms since the class had grown!

What else is happening in the Braxton County Adult Learning Center? In October, the ABE students went to College Day at the Charleston Civic Center. At the request of Mrs. Curtis, Phil Pfister, the "World's Strongest Man" and Charleston, WV firefighter, came to the Civic Center to meet with the students from Braxton County. A tall, gentle-looking man whose attitude belies his physical prowess, Mr. Pfister spoke to the students about how to realize

dreams and meet goals. Additionally, the CEO from Chainbreakers, Mr. Andy Palmer, star of *West Virginia's Most Wanted* and a close friend of Phil Pfister, spoke to the students about achieving success and staying drug-free. He brought along an individual who had been shot in Charleston while waiting for the school bus. This man recited inspirational rap poetry that seemed to really reach the students.

Also last fall, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Moore invited the students to take a field trip to Elm Lane Hereford Farms. Students were allowed to assist in giving the cattle shots and, under the veterinarian's supervision, those brave enough could try their hand at doing pregnancy tests. The students also rode around the property to see how difficult it was to count cattle and to experience the duties of a farmer. The Moore's furnished a great lunch for the students as well.

In December, the ABE class traveled to Buckhannon, WV and toured the Fred B. Eberlee Vocational Center. Several students had expressed an interest in furthering their education in the areas of welding and nursing. Students toured the center and were exposed to a wide arena of vocational training choices.

Also in December, Mission West Virginia offered a free e-commerce class for local, home-based and small business owners who had 50 or fewer employees. The class focused on how electronic commerce could improve one's business by developing an electronic commerce website. For those who already had a business website, suggestions were made on how to upgrade and improve it. Over one hundred phone calls were received from persons wishing to attend the class. Individuals who attended the class were thrilled with the course content and the fact that those who completed the class received a free computer. Since the class was limited to ten students, another class will be held in the spring.

What's next in Braxton County? Guess we'll have to wait and see, but I'm sure it will be something "outside the box!" ■

Students in McDowell County get jobs and cars

By Joy Walker, McDowell/Wyoming SPOKES Career Development Consultant

Say what you will and think what you like, but good things are happening for the SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Success) students in McDowell County. Just ask students Jennifer Stacy and Amanda Green.

Both ladies are single mothers; Jennifer has an eight-month-old son, and Amanda is the mother of three, ages 6 years, 4 years, and 7 months. Both faced transportation concerns and were using their parents' vehicles to get back and forth to class. Both of these students completed the SPOKES program within a few weeks of each other, and both worked very hard to complete the requirements for the class. Each set goals for themselves and then set the plan in motion to accomplish their goals. They worked on their portfolios and finished with a product that would impress any employer. Apparently they did an excellent job – both are now employed!

For Jennifer, some life challenges presented themselves and she found herself back home in McDowell County searching for employment. Her confidence was a bit low, her skills a bit rusty, but her desire to get back on her feet was quite strong.

After a couple of weeks in SPOKES, I could see Jennifer's confidence rebuilding. She gained the strength to start applying for positions posted on job search web sites. I encouraged her to apply for outside sales positions. She had the personality and the skills to succeed in this field. Many jobs she applied for showed home offices in Charleston, Morgantown, etc. This discouraged her until I explained to her that this was probably where the home offices were located, and they were most likely looking for territory representatives. Sure enough, she was contacted by a few companies and was offered and has accepted two separate positions, one with The Neilson Company and the other with Kellogg's. She can work both jobs based on the schedules they require.

Amanda had other challenges. Being a stay-at-home mom for the past seven years, Amanda had not worked since her high school days. Fortunately, Amanda had been a good student. Although she had not used her computer skills for years, once she familiarized herself with them again, she did very well. The effort Amanda put forth in SPOKES was

Continued on page 6

McDowell County SPOKES program receives Wal-Mart grant

In December, Wal-Mart of Kimball, WV was pleased to present a grant of \$750 to the the McDowell County SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Success) program located in Welch, WV. According to program instructor, Jared Cantrell, the grant will be used to purchase supplies and equipment to better serve SPOKES participants and allow them to reach their full potential.

Instructor Jared Cantrell developed and submitted the grant. Cantrell, instructor Karen Piotrowski, and career development consultant, Joy Walker, work with the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) to provide their clients with employability and life skills, and to help them transition into employment. The program coordinator noted that

“Jared always takes the time for his students and has a passion for his work. He is a real asset.” Cook described the mission of the SPOKES program as “providing employability skills, mentoring, and employment opportunities to help adult learners meet challenges and move ahead in life.”

This grant reflects Wal-Mart's ongoing dedication to assist in the development of programs to meet the economic, educational, and employment needs of Southern West Virginia. The check is courtesy of Wal-Mart's Good Works Program and was presented by the store manager, Brad Garret. ■

Students get cars . . .

Continued from page 5

impressive. When we started to work on her resume, she assured me she really didn't have any skills. I assured her that she did. A stay-at-home mom – no skills – NO WAY! As I brought up things like multi-tasking, organizing, good listening, etc., Amanda was amazed that these skills were also employability skills. She participates in church and school activities with her children, keeps the household running, and is the mommy of three little ones. Skills?! Yes, I would say she has skills. Once Amanda completed her portfolio, she also went on the job search.

On one of my employer visits to the new prison site in McDowell County, I was told about a contractor looking for a secretary. After speaking with this company, I suggested Amanda get in touch with them. She called that day, had an interview that evening, and was offered the position. She accepted.

Thanks to Mike Stanley with the McDowell County Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), both of these ladies will soon receive vehicles. Jennifer should have hers by the time this newsletter is published. Amanda's should be forthcoming very soon.

Of course, the students had to meet requirements and the vehicles were on a first-come, first-served basis. They were only for SPOKES students who completed the program and had jobs. I knew Jennifer had a chance; I wasn't sure if Amanda could finish the

class and get a job in time. She did, and I am so glad for her. When I called her to tell her the good news, she was having a really bad day. This was such good news and a huge relief for her.

This job can be so humbling. I guess I caught myself feeling pretty good about "me," what "I" had helped these students do when, in actuality, it wasn't me at all. They did all the work, put forth all the effort, and made things happen for themselves. They accepted the challenge of SPOKES, they came to class every day, and they did what was required of them. I was just a tool that was available to help them, and in some way I steered them in the right direction. I just helped bring out in them what was there all along. ■

ESCAPE!

By Edward Hicks, Adult Basic Education Coordinator

■ We've all wanted to "escape" from time to time; to temporarily abandon the routine, the rituals of daily life. But not many of us have what it takes to run *into* burning buildings and homes, to answer the call of a multi-vehicle pileup on the interstate highway, or to foil a bank robbery! However, this is exactly what many "first responders" face on a regular basis in their jobs. Firefighters, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), law enforcement officers, paramedics, and others are highly trained professionals in the exciting and often dangerous field of first responders - men and women who are first on the scene of life-and-death situations which require immediate attention.



Chief Richard Picciotto of FDNY, last rescuer to make it out of the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11, 2001.

The West Virginia Department of Education, in coordination with RESA I (Regional Education Service Agency I) Public Service Training, conducts the annual *ESCAPE* (Emergency Services Conference At Pipestem) conference to provide advanced training and professional development sessions for first responders and adult education instructors in West Virginia.

Continued on page 7

ESCAPE! . . .

Continued from page 6



ESCAPE! students participate in hands-on field training.

Classroom sessions are conducted in diverse subjects such as leadership, financial planning, instructional methodology, and hands-on field training.

The conference provides an opportunity for those from all over West Virginia, as well as 13 other states (including Hawaii), to attend training for certifications, and to exchange ideas with other professionals in a picturesque setting in Southern West Virginia.

Exhibitors are also on hand to display the latest in communications, safety, and rescue equipment from some of the top manufacturers. These vendors provide live demonstrations and interactive sessions.

Keynote speakers are both entertaining and informative. This year's speakers included Randolph Mantooth, "Johnny Gage" of the long-running TV show *Emergency!*, and Chief Richard Picciotto of

FDNY, who wrote the best-seller, *Last Man Out*, which details his harrowing experience of being the last rescuer to make it out of the North Tower of the World Trade Center alive after rescuing many civilians and being buried in rubble for over four hours.

Pipestem State Park opens its doors for *ESCAPE!* every February, with all rooms being booked a year in advance. With assistance from our regional public service training coordinators, Rick Rice and Sandy Hawley of RESA I do an outstanding job of organizing the conference. For additional information, please contact Rick or Sandy at (304) 256-4712. ■



Randolph Mantooth, who played Johnny Gage of the long-running TV show, *Emergency!*

Adult students take advantage of library opportunities

By Erin Bowers, Adult Basic Education Instructor, Ohio County

On January 25, 2007 the adult basic education (ABE) class from West Virginia Northern Community College Haze Atlas Site took a tour of the Ohio County Public Library. This was a brief and informative tour.

The ABE students were shown the computers, magazines, videos, audios, card catalog computers, children's section, meeting rooms, tax preparation volunteers, the main desk, and the reference desk.

The students were also shown how to log-on to the <http://www.wvinfo depot.org> and <http://www.learningexpresslibrary.com> websites. The

Learning Express website has free full-length General Educational Development (GED) practice tests which are available to all WV public library card holders. Students were impressed when they completed some of these tests which were scored as soon as they were submitted.

For more information about public libraries and adult education/literacy, contact Susan Hayden, adult services library consultant, West Virginia Library Commission, 1900 Kanawha BLVD, East, Charleston, WV 25305, haydens@wvlc.lib.wv.us, (304) 558-3978, ext. 2014, or your local library. ■

2007 conference options for adult educators

By Cathy Shank, WVABE Professional Development Coordinator

This summer, the Department of Education's *Technical and Adult Education Conference* returns after a two-year hiatus. The conference will be held at the Charleston Civic Center July 30 - August 1.

For the past two years, West Virginia's adult basic education (ABE) program has been offering its own *Summer Core Institute*. This year, the institute will be offered immediately following the conference, August 1 - August 3.

The annual ABE peer trainers and regional coordinators meeting will be scheduled within the *Technical and Adult Education Conference*. Registration fees for the conference and institute have not yet been set. Registration for each event will be handled separately. One hour of non-degree graduate credit may be available for an additional fee through Marshall University to those who attend the conference. More announcements will be forthcoming.

Lodging rates will range from \$82 to \$124 per night. Blocks of rooms have been set up at the Holiday Inn Civic Center, Marriott, and Embassy Suites.

Professional development offerings during the *Technical and Adult Education Conference* itself and at the post-conference *Summer Core Institute* will provide opportunities for both core and elective credit. Core offerings at the institute will include: ASMT 101-TABE (for 1st year ABE), ASMT 100 and CURR 100 (for 2nd year ABE), LIT 100 (for ABE and ESL) and CITZ 100 (for ESL only).

For the first time, pre-service peer training for brand new ABE instructors and special training for AEMIS (Adult Education Management Information System) data managers will be offered as part of the *Summer Core Institute*.

**technical and adult
education conference
ABE summer institute
July 30 - August 1
Civic Center
Charleston, WV**

21st Century Skills for Life October 24 - 26 Oglebay Conference Center Wheeling, WV

The fall adult education and family literacy conference sponsored by the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.) entitled *21st Century Skills for Life*, is scheduled for October 24-26 at Oglebay Conference Center in Wheeling, WV. It will offer a wide variety of both core and elective professional development sessions for ABE, ESL (English as a Second Language), SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Success), and Even Start/Family Literacy instructors and tutors, as well as for participants from all partner organizations.

This year, the *General Educational Development (GED) Examiners Conference* and the annual *SPOKES Retreat* will be held in conjunction with the annual fall conference. With the addition of these adult education professionals, this conference will provide a great opportunity to relax and network with others serving adult populations.

Registration fees for WVAEA, Inc. members will vary from \$70-\$160 depending on how many days attended. Lodging rates at Oglebay begin at \$99 with higher prices for more amenities and multiple occupancy. Core sessions will include: GED 100, GED 101, WORK 100, WORK 200, WORK 201, and ESLCURRE 101. For more information, continue to check <http://www.wvaea.org/>.

In planning which conference to attend, ABE instructors should look carefully to see which core sessions they are required to take for their specialty, and which sessions will be offered at each conference. English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors should plan to attend ESL-related core and elective sessions at the post-conference *Summer Core Institute*. SPOKES instructors should plan to attend the fall conference for work-readiness related core and elective sessions. There will not be a separate *SPOKES Retreat* next spring.

Continued on page 9

Conference options . . .

Continued from page 8

Another opportunity for adult educators to consider is the WORKFORCE WV Conference, July 24-27 at the Mountaineer Racetrack and Gaming Resort in Chester, WV. The early bird registration fee is \$125 before June 1 and \$150 after that. A block of rooms is reserved at \$58 per night. For more information, go to <https://www.workforcewv.org/> and click the button on the top for Conference Information. ■

WORKFORCE WV conference
July 24 - 27
Mountaineer Gaming and Racetrack
Chester, WV

The information you need is right at your fingertips

By Ellen Killion, ABE Specialist, RESA III

Who is the literacy contact person for my county? What are the new performance measures for FY08? Where do I find information about General Educational Development (GED) testing accommodations? What do I need to do in order to become a certified distance education instructor? Where can I find information about assessment procedures? Is there a tracking form that I can use to track my professional development credits? How do I

know what the requirements are for professional development?

The answer to all these questions and more is right at your fingertips in the *West Virginia Adult Basic Education (WVABE) Instructor Handbook*. In this handbook, you will find the most current forms for intake and enrollment, distance education, student confidentiality, professional

Continued on page 11

Adult student of the year featured on WSAZ-TV Cover Story

By Pam Bryan, Adult Basic Education Special Projects Coordinator and Literacy West Virginia Regional Technical Assistant

On Friday, March 9, 2007 the *Cover Story* on WSAZ-TV in the Charleston-Huntington area focused on literacy. It featured Cora McGuire, the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.) student of the year for 2006 and Pam Bryan, Literacy WV regional technical assistant and adult basic education (ABE) special projects coordinator. Also included in the clip was Gail Thompson, Putnam County literacy volunteer who, along with her husband, Walker, and Cindy Winters, learning center coordinator at the Putnam County Learning Center, worked with Cora to help her achieve her success.

The story by newscaster, Amanda Barren, highlighted these programs. It was one person's story, but it was a true testimonial on how *all* of our programs affect West Virginia adults and how they impact the community and economy.

My experience with student interviews has been a very positive one. I was not disappointed with Cora. Her

conversation and expression was so inspiring. Many times I have tried to create such an image in the minds of the audience, but I don't know what it feels like to need help with reading. I have never been in this position, so I cannot adequately speak for those who have.

It takes a brave person to speak about reading problems. Our society does not understand the literacy issue that many adults face every day. Sometimes they even think that people with reading issues are probably not very intelligent. Cora and many other adult students have proven this theory wrong.

Encourage your students to speak about their learning experience. Their voices can recruit more students into your program. If you have a student who would like to be interviewed, please contact me or Kathy Hollingsworth at (800) 642-2670. ■

Valentine's Day surprise

By Dianna Flanagan, Regional Coordinator of Adult Education, RESA V

After many months of planning by the Mid-Ohio Valley One-Stop managers, Bill Monterosso, One-Stop operator; Criss McCauley, Job Service & Unemployment manager; Jerry Carper, Division of Rehabilitation Services supervisor; Karen Matthews, SCSEP supervisor, and Dianna Flanagan, regional coordinator of adult education, attended a system-wide meeting at the Comfort Suites in Mineral Wells.

Over 150 people from 17 different agencies pre-registered for the meeting. However, Mother Nature had other plans; Valentine's Day turned out to be one of the worst weather days our region has seen. As the rain, sleet, and snow came down outside, 104 brave souls participated in a very rewarding day.

The room was brightly decorated with balloons and candy kisses on each table. Ron Radcliff was unable to attend due to the weather, but Joyce Okes, WORKFORCE WV program manager gave everyone an overview of the WORKFORCE WV system. She explained how all of us play a part in the Workforce System, similar to the ingredients in a cake. If one ingredient is missing, the cake is not the same.

Bill Monterosso went over objectives for the meeting which included understanding the Workforce WV System, realizing each agency's contributions within the Workforce WV System, understanding the importance and benefits of collaboration, understanding the benefits our customers receive from an integrated system, and additional topics as indicated by audience.

Next everyone was given a card with 16 boxes, each containing an agency; 104 people mingled around the room for 10 minutes obtaining signatures to complete their card. Several people obtained all 16 signatures and received a stress ball as a prize.

The fun continued as groups were formed by the shape and color on their name tag; the groups consisted of six agencies from each county. The groups worked on several activities together; the entire room was full of conversation and laughter.

The afternoon concluded with CAKE! All the ingredients had come together to form a team. Plans were made to share information with the counties that were snow bound, and to hold quarterly meetings for each county team to continue with the collaboration.

Anastasia Hilvers, Pleasants & Tyler Counties ABE instructor, wrote:

"Misty Dawson and I couldn't quit talking all the way home about the impact of the meeting. The esprit des corps was incredible.

It was worth braving the elements ...especially since dear Misty has four-wheel drive. We hope in the early part of school year 2007-2008 we can do something similar to keep the network contacts current and to continue to develop these budding relationships.

To meet the people and to hear them say that we can work out just about anything was very motivating. There is no substitute for the face-to-face time like this meeting provided.

There were a few things I thought were particularly successful.

One was the colored symbols that grouped us at tables with others we could work with from other agencies. Because of that activity, I made a lot of progress in finding out what the agencies did. They also introduced me to people who could solve problems I had.

Another good feature was that the activities were not too intense and allowed a little time to get to know one another better professionally. One of the activities allowed us to circulate, and I decided not to try to win the game. Instead, when I ran into others that could help me or people I had previously met and wanted to strengthen our relationship, I could do so for a few minutes and move on.

The activity with the scenarios was a real eye-opener. Here I was with strangers, and we easily fell into problem-solving mode. I felt certain that if faced with a real situation that required us to collaborate, we could do so with the same ease.

On behalf of Misty and me, thank you and your staff for all your hard work."

Continued on page 11

Distance education program grant . . .

Continued from page 2

reassessment, we are planning to include a quarterly drawing for those students who have met their 40-hour goal for three consecutive months.

The winner of this drawing will have a variety of prizes to choose from such as a printing calculator, Mavis Beacon typing software, a rotary desk organizer, or Resume maker software, to mention a few. We also plan to include an even bigger prize for a "Student of the Year" for distance education.

We began the gift card incentive at the end of February and so far have had two students take advantage of this offer. We plan to launch the incentive program full force after the beginning of the fiscal year. We will keep you informed about how our students progress and their response to these incentives!

If you are interested in applying for a grant through WVAEA, Inc., check out the web site at <http://www.wvaea.org>. Click on the "Special Event Application" for a copy of the grant. ■

Surprise . . .

Continued from page 10

WORKFORCE WV managers hope that other workforce regions will hold similar meetings in the future, but beware of Mother Nature.

If you would like additional information concerning the system-wide meeting, contact Dianna Flanagan at (304) 485-6513 x119 or Joyce Okes at (304) 424-7271. ■

Information at your fingertips . . .

Continued from page 9

development in-service tracking, and GED test registration. Here you will find the latest information on performance measures, program guidelines, assessment procedures, professional development requirements, and distance education certification procedures. The handbook also includes marketing guidelines to help you build your program, as well as suggestions for student retention so that you can maintain your program.


You will find contact information for your state ABE personnel, literacy programs, county directors, tutoring programs, One-Stop centers,

rehabilitation centers, vocational centers, and West Virginia colleges and universities. There is even a national hotline directory for locating services for individuals with special needs!

Each year this handbook is updated with the latest information relating to ABE. To ensure you have the most current forms and information, be sure to download a copy of the handbook by logging on to <http://wvabe.org/teacherhandbook.htm>. Or you may request a copy to be mailed to you by calling Vicki Moss at (800) 642-2670. The FY08 version will be available around mid-July. ■

Wanted: empty inkjet and laser toner cartridges

By Ellen Killion, ABE Specialist, RESA III

 Wanted! We are looking for empty ink jet cartridges and laser toner cartridges, and we need your help!

The distance education program has initiated a recycling fundraiser program to generate additional funds that will be used to purchase student incentives. This program is at no cost to you. Postage-paid envelopes and/or boxes are available upon request for your convenience. And not only will you be helping distance education students around the state, but you will also be helping the environment!

If you would like to help us with this, please contact Ellen Killion at ekillion@access.k12.wv.us or Pam Bryan at pbryan@access.k12.wv.us. We will send you a list of the cartridges that we are looking for as well as some postage-paid envelopes, posters, and/or boxes. ■

Meet the staff of Literacy West Virginia

By Pam Bryan, Regional Technical Assistant

Editor's Note: In the summer 2006 issue, Networks began featuring the staff of Literacy West Virginia by sharing their professional information with you, our readers. This issue highlights Judy Bowling, regional technical assistant in Harrison County.



Judy Bowling graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a bachelor of arts degree in English Writing and Literature. She used her strong interest in reading and writing as a catalyst to become a volunteer tutor for Literacy Volunteers of Harrison County. Shortly after becoming a volunteer, she served as program coordinator for four-and-a-half years.

Judy also worked as a regional technical assistant and interim director of Literacy Volunteers of West Virginia. In this capacity, she wrote and directed the Literacy West

Virginia AmeriCorps Project where she managed 15 AmeriCorps members across the state.

After assisting with the merger of the state literacy organization to Literacy West Virginia, Judy continued her role as the regional technical assistant. She also served as ProLiteracy America's South East Regional Representative for three years. The states she managed included West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Judy has completed the Power Path and Payne trainings on learning differences. Recently Judy was employed by the SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Success) program in Harrison County. She is also a trainer for the West Virginia adult basic education (ABE) program in Special Learning Needs and Literacy 100 trainings across the state.

Judy has lived in Clarksburg for 14 years with her two sons Nolan and Logan. ■

Morgantown resident receives GED national award for outstanding achievement

By Debra Kimbler, West Virginia GED Administrator

The West Virginia Department of Education General Educational Development (GED) office recognized a Morgantown resident as winner of the 2005 GED National Award for Outstanding Achievement. Matthew J. Kinkus, 20, earned West Virginia's highest GED tests scores. He triumphed with a score of 3770 points out of a possible 4,000, with a total average score of 754.

The GED Statistical Report conveys that the mean standard scores for all candidates who take at least one GED test range from 468 to 545. The passing scores are consistent with the standard score information that indicates that Mathematics Part I and Part II was the

most difficult content area. Very few candidates score above 600 on the mathematics part of the GED. It is in this most difficult content area that Mr. Kinkus achieved a perfect score of 800.

The state GED administrator, Debra Kimbler, recognized Kinkus at the opening of the 2006 GED Examiners' Conference. Attending the conference at Canaan Valley Resort were GED examiners, regional coordinators and special guests. Among the guests were Matthew's wife and several family members. Kimbler reported that scoring a 3770 on the GED Tests places Matthew Kinkus in the top

Continued on page 13

National award . . .

Continued from page 12

one percent of the GED Standard Score and Estimated National Class Rank (US) of Graduating High School Seniors.

Matthew was born in 1986 and is the son of Paul Kinkus and Kathy Metcalf of Pennsylvania. Earlier on in his life, Morgantown, West Virginia became his home.

It was here in this West Virginia town that Matthew developed a love for reading, learning other languages, and playing music. He took the GED Tests at the Monongalia County Technical Education Center located in Morgantown. His love



of academics helped Matthew earn the highest scores of all GED candidates testing in 2005 within West Virginia.

Although the GED Tests indicated that Matthew's strongest academic area was mathematics, this fall he has plans to attend West Virginia University where he is hoping to study languages and then go into medical school in Vancouver, Canada. He is currently working with the disabled population. ■

West Virginia GED testing centers shine!

By Debra Kimbler, West Virginia GED Administrator

At the 2006 *General Educational Development (GED) Examiners' Conference* several awards were given to counties and institutional education centers showing improvement or surpassing all others in the number of GED candidates tested and the number of GED candidates that passed the GED. These results were taken from the 2004 GED Statistical Report, which is the most recent report coming from the American Council on Education, GED Testing Service.

Once again, capturing the honors for **the highest test volume** was the Putnam Career Technical Center whose chief examiner is Joyce Wilson with Mary Igo and Karen Hanson serving as alternate examiners. Putnam County tested a total of 455 GED candidates.

The *institutional* education center acquiring the **highest test volume** was the West Virginia Industrial Home for Youth with chief examiner Karen Zinn and GED examiner Katherine Blankenship. A total of 177 GED candidates were tested at this site.

Several counties were recognized for **increasing test volume**, with Lewis County GED Test Center and Mercer County Technical Education Center, sharing the honors of increasing the testing volume 0.8 percent. Robert Simpson, chief examiner in Lewis County, Garnetta Belcher, chief GED examiner for Mercer County, and Barbara

Blankenship, examiner in Mercer County were all recognized for this accomplishment.

The *institutional* center with the **highest passing rate** and the **greatest increase in the passing rate** was Lakin Correctional Center, with Standley Greene as chief examiner and Lesa Smith as GED examiner. This center went from a 77 percent passing rate to 100 percent passing rate.

Increasing the **number of passing GED candidates** from 117 to 182 was Mercer County Technical Center, while Pocahontas Free Library's award for going from a 40 percent passing rate to an 80 percent passing rate was accepted by Linda Beverage, chief examiner.

RESA III (Regional Education Service Agency III) chief examiner Barry Kelly and GED examiner Benda Helmick, along with the Putnam County Career and Technical Center personnel mentioned above, shared the honor of having the **highest percentage of GED candidates passing** – 88 percent. These two West Virginia testing sites far surpassed the 2004 national passing rate of 71 percent.

This data once again made West Virginia's GED centers shine! ■

e-Learning for adult educators

By Carole Totten, Kanawha County ABE Learning Center Coordinator

No good deed goes unpunished, you know. So when I raved about the online professional development courses I was taking to the wrong person (namely our professional development guru, Cathy Shank), I should have known there would be unintended consequences - she asked me to write an article about it. But it's OK, Cathy; it's not hard to write about these classes because I truly feel enthusiastic about them. I hope you'll try the classes and see if you feel the same way.

I believe it was Cathy who sent out the original email to the adult basic education program (ABE) listserv that introduced me to the *e-Learning for Educators* online classes. Since I needed credit hours to renew my certificate, I visited the website listed in the email, <http://www.wvde.state.wv.us/pd/elearning>, and looked at the catalog of classes that are available for different certification levels - elementary, middle and high school, and all levels. The website currently lists 30 choices, and the topics range from technology in the classroom to using math manipulatives and everything in between. Registration is completely online and couldn't be simpler; just an email address and completion of a simple form are required to get started. Three hours of graduate credit are available from either Marshall University (\$105) or West Virginia University (\$130).

To be successful in these classes, it helps to have more than a nodding acquaintance with computers, but the lesson website itself is reasonably intuitive. Participants are directed to a website where they log-in with a user name and password. Each class has an excellent facilitator who skillfully guides the participants through the sessions and provides feedback and technical help if needed. Each of the classes lasts for six weeks and consists of six lessons with a mid-point assignment and a final project. Participants have a week to complete each assignment, which involves reading materials online or evaluating websites.

The second requirement is to contribute to a discussion group and post relevant comments about the topic discussed in the readings. I found that I spent from four to eight hours a week reading the assignments and posting to the discussion groups.

I found the readings to be just the kind of professional development experience I like - recent research-based best practices that I could carry right into the classroom. And the discussion groups were, if you can believe this, wonderfully stimulating. Participants are generally required to summarize or critique the readings and then reply to at least two other postings. What usually happened, however, was that we'd have hundreds of postings with lively discussions and exchanges of ideas and, again, best practices from experienced and dedicated teaching professionals from around the state.

“These classes have re-kindled that love of learning in me and inspired me to be a better teacher.”

My first class was *Finding the Best Educational Resources on the Web*. Its focus was on helping teachers to become more comfortable with using the Internet for classroom activities and instruction. We learned how to search the web efficiently, evaluate websites, and guide students to exciting multimedia resources.

For my final project I researched and organized the best online fraction games to use as a supplement to a classroom instruction.

Next, I took a class called *Helping Struggling Readers Comprehend*. Even though I took two semesters of reading classes for my K-8 Multi-Subjects degree, that was a few (ha!) years ago, so this was good review of basic reading principles.

I came out of this class with a renewed respect for the intricacies of reading and a determination to help our adult students improve comprehension. I now try to offer more direct instruction in vocabulary and concept development, and I'm more aware of the importance of activating prior knowledge when reading.

I was also reminded about the effectiveness of modeling comprehension strategies to our students.

For my final project in this course, I submitted a lesson plan that incorporated some of the strategies I learned. I created a web-based lesson on animal

Continued on page 15

E-Learning . . .

Continued from page 14

adaptations (with lots of videos and some vocabulary activities) to help students obtain some “prior knowledge” about the important science concept and its vocabulary.

My last class was titled *Designing a Virtual Field Trip*. We saw many examples (check out this one: http://www.click2disasters.com/pompeii/pompeii_ch1.htm) and spent a lot of time analyzing and evaluating these examples to determine what made the field trip effective. Then we designed our own virtual field trip using web-based tools, Microsoft Word, or PowerPoint. I chose to visit the rainforest through online videos. It was a fun class and, once again, I learned a lot about resources that already exist on the web.

I have signed-up for a fourth class, *Transforming the Classroom with Project Based Learning*. I am looking forward to learning how to use this cross-curriculum strategy with our adult students.

I am ashamed to admit that I have sometimes thought of professional development classes as tedious (yawn) necessities. Intellectually, I understood their importance and respected our administrators’ desire to encourage a love of lifelong learning among those of us who choose to teach. But now, I’m a believer!

I learned a great deal about the incredible, free resources on the Internet, and I had a lot of fun doing it! These classes have re-kindled that love of learning in me and inspired me to be a better teacher. For more information about e-Learning courses, visit the website, <http://www.wvde.state.wv.us/pd/elearning>. ■

Thinking it over: SPOKES programs adopt mission and values

By Shawn Cook, Regional Coordinator of Adult Education, RESAI

On November 8, 2006 regional coordinator of adult education, Shawn Cook, facilitated a roundtable for all RESAI (Regional Education Service Agency I) SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Employment Success) instructors. The roundtable was attended by 13 program instructors from Mercer, Wyoming, McDowell and Raleigh Counties. In addition DHHR (Department of Health and Human Resources) representatives from each county attended. Beth Vass, adult basic education (ABE) curriculum coordinator, and Tyann Douglas, SPOKES curriculum coordinator, also participated.

The group began the meeting by drafting a mission statement and adopting core values for the program. The purpose of this is to provide guidance in program planning and to provide a standard “for the evaluation of our decisions and our actions in the classroom.”

During a working lunch, DHHR representatives discussed their goals and desires for the programs. In addition, each instructor shared instructional strategies that he/she considered especially helpful. Outgoing Wyoming County instructor Sherry Palmer identified

Our mission states our goal for each day. It is rooted in the purpose of our organization. Our mission is what we do each day to realize our vision of communities where everyone is equipped to meet the challenges of life. This is our mission:

By providing employability skills, mentoring, and employment opportunities, enthusiastic and caring professionals help adult learners meet challenges and move ahead.

Continued on page 22

Upshur County SPOKES spotlight

By Tammy Sheets and Marion Sparks, Upshur County SPOKES Instructors

It is very difficult for us to pick just one success story to share with you because we feel that our Upshur County SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Success) and adult basic education (ABE) programs are success stories in their own right. Each program exhibits success every single day that it is in operation. Whether we are discussing our staff, our students, the DHHR (Department of Health and Human Resources), or our personnel at the regional and state levels, the success stories that we tell, and will re-tell throughout the years of our lives, are the direct results of the combined efforts of all these agencies.

With that being said, we do have one particular story that claims the spotlight. Not that we place greater emphasis on this particular one over all others, it just captures our attention because what seemed to be impossible goal for the student, made us question ourselves as to whether or not we were pushing her too hard.

It all began just like any other morning at our SPOKES classroom. We all were discussing the job opportunities that were listed in the local newspapers and who should apply for which job when we came across an advertisement for a Wilderness Guide/Counselor at Alldredge Academy. This position requires a particular type of person with a true love of nature, lots of patience, and a huge sense of personal commitment to helping others. One of our students whom we will call Kate mentioned that this was her ideal job but that she had no experience and, therefore, no chance at all in obtaining a position like this one.

When Marion and I heard this statement, we told Kate that nothing is out of reach if you want it badly enough and are willing to be more and do more than you ever thought you could. I told Kate that I was very familiar with this program and felt that she would be an ideal fit. I also told her that I knew that the Academy is always willing to educate and train the right person, and that the right person is very difficult for them to find.

With our strong encouragement and support, and the push that I mentioned earlier, Kate got online, completed the application, and forwarded a copy of her resume and reference page to Alldredge Academy

with great personal reservation. Even as she was pushing the send button, she sighed a big sigh and said that she had no idea why she just applied for a position that she was not qualified to do.

For the remainder of the day, Kate agonized over the fact that she felt so badly, and that the person who received her application was probably laughing at her. This, in turn, made us feel like we pushed her too hard and, although we tried not to show it, I think that we actually felt worse than she did.

The very next day, Kate received an email asking her to call the Academy and set up an interview. One would have thought that this alone would have made her feel better, but it didn't.

She was still hesitant to contact them for fear of rejection because she had no experience. Again, we supported her and strongly encouraged her to call even though we were also feeling a sense of reservation. Finally, she gained enough strength to do more than she thought she could and entered the office, closed the door, and placed the call. We eagerly anticipated Kate's return.

Upon her exit, she was beaming and we were relieved by the news that followed! The gentleman from the Academy told her that she did not need experience and that they would train her for the position if she turned out to be the right candidate for the job. She was to be at the interview the following afternoon. We held our breath.

The next day, Kate called to share the great news. The Academy hired her and she would begin the following day. She was so excited and happy, and we were too. We all rejoiced and sighed a huge sigh of relief. We knew that this was just a baby step, and that Kate still had a long path to travel before we could consider this as a success story. Her DHHR worker agreed with us and voiced her concerns not just to us, but to Kate as well.

A few weeks passed, and we heard nothing. Then the weeks turned to months and still we heard nothing. Then one day when we least expected it, Kate walked back through our door all smiles. She proceeded to tell us all about her wonderful experiences at the Academy and how she had

Continued on page 17

SPOKES spotlight . . .

Continued from page 16

finally found the place where she belonged. Her supervisors were very supportive and very impressed with her skills and personal qualities. She fit in perfectly!

As Kate was saying her goodbyes, she apologized for not calling us sooner. She said that it was extremely important to her to stop by in person so that

she could hug us and thank us for being so supportive and for believing in her and encouraging her to believe in herself.

You can now see why this success story claims the spotlight for our SPOKES program here in Upshur County. ■

Upshur County ABE center displays sign

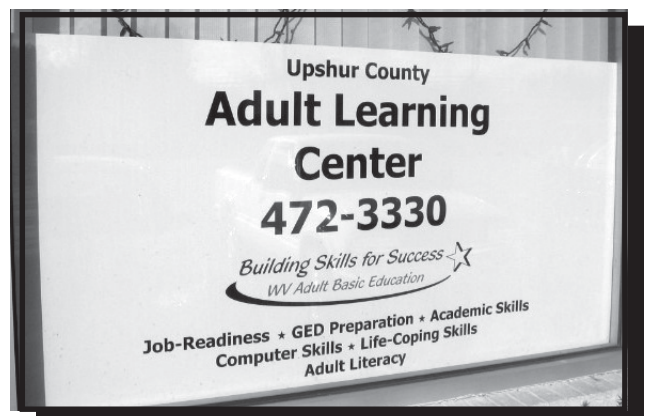
■ All adult basic education (ABE) full-time learning centers and several “permanent” part-time centers throughout West Virginia are now more visible.

Knowing the physical address alone is often not enough for potential students, administrators, and/or visitors to easily locate the actual adult learning center. Centers with their own entrance doors and/or “wings” within career centers, and even centers in stand-alone buildings, are often difficult to find.

Aluminum signs have been custom-made for every learning center. They have been delivered to the regional coordinators of adult education, and all centers should have their signs on display by now.

These signs were designed to hang on the outside of a building, to display in a window, or to hang on an interior wall within a facility to indicate the location of the adult learning center.

If you are an instructor in a full-time or “permanent” part-time program and have not received your sign, please contact your regional coordinator. For a list of regional coordinators, refer to your *Instructor Handbook*, or the fall 2006 *Information Exchange*. ■



Upshur County displays its sign in the window of the adult learning center.

Good will in RESA I region

By Shawn Cook, Regional Coordinator of Adult Education, RESA I

■ Central to the story of Christmas are the offerings of good will to everyone, the recognition of potential in each person, and the hope of a new beginning for those facing challenges. These ideas were embodied in student recognition programs hosted by SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Success) programs in McDowell, Wyoming and Raleigh Counties. Program instructors concluded the instructional day by providing a holiday lunch for

students. The lunch included a small recognition ceremony.

According to program coordinator Shawn Cook the recognition was a little different for each program. In McDowell County, instructor Jared Cantrell hosted an auction. Students bid for items ranging from personal hygiene products to *Hot Wheels* cars (for the kids at home) using “SPOKES bucks.” SPOKES bucks are tokens awarded during

Continued on page 20

The faces of the adult education hotline: RESA III ABE and SPOKES support staff at your service

By Cathy Shank, WVABE Professional Development Coordinator

If you have ever dialed the toll-free Adult Education Hotline, (800) 642-2670, you have probably spoken to Connie Blake, Christina Harper, Benda Helmick, or Vicki Moss.

In addition to their many other program duties, these dedicated women assist countless adult students searching for volunteer literacy, adult basic education (ABE), or vocational programs in their local communities, for online distance education study opportunities, or for General Educational Development (GED) testing centers. Every day they field many general questions regarding literacy and adult basic education programs in West Virginia.

They also transfer calls to the WV Department of Education for those who wish to connect with state level ABE program personnel (such as the GED Administrator) without incurring long distance charges. ABE instructors know that if they have a question, they can call the hotline and be connected with the right person.

It is time to meet the faces behind the voices you hear on the phone.



Vicki Moss

The newest member of this team is Vicki Moss who started working in January of this year, taking on many of the responsibilities previously handled by Christina Harper including primary responsibility for the hotline. Vicki provides support for Ellen Killion with adult basic education (ABE) distance education, Cathy Shank with professional development, Kathy Hollingsworth with public outreach, and Pam Bryan with special projects - the statewide ABE programs based at Regional Educational Service Agency III (RESA III) in Dunbar.

Vicki says this is her "...most fulfilling position since starting in the field of education." Her goal is "to help all adults in West Virginia take advantage of our free education system..." so that "...West Virginia

can improve its productive workforce with quality skills." She believes it takes "courage and commitment" to take the initiative to get a GED or pursue any continuing education, and that adults who take this step should be applauded for this great accomplishment.

Prior to working in ABE, Vicki spent seven years working for the WV Department of Education (WVDE) in the Office of 21st Century Schools. Previously she worked in the Office of Instructional Materials, English Language/Arts and Foreign Language.

Vicki graduated from South Portland High School in Portland, Maine, and later attended South Portland Vocational/Technical School. Vicki returned to her native West Virginia and now resides in Sissonville where she enjoys gardening and other outdoor activities.

Christina Harper who now provides full-time support for ABE programs funded by the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) still handles some of the hotline calls. She works with Tyann Douglas and David Hollingsworth to assist SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Success) instructors, career development consultants, and

Continued on page 19

The faces of the adult education hotline . . .

Continued from page 18



Christina Harper

ABE assessment specialists who serve WV Works customers. Previously, Christina had divided her time between programs related to both ABE and DHHR.

For the last several years, Christina has also served as registration chair for the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.) and often assists the Kanawha County ABE program with AEMIS (Adult Education Management Information System) data entry and training.

Christina is a graduate of DuPont High School, holds an associate certificate in Accounting/Data Processing from Garnet Career Center, and is working on a bachelor of science in Organizational Leadership. Before coming to work at RESA III she worked with the WVDE Finance Department and JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act) and at the Garnet Adult Learning Center in Kanawha County.

In addition to covering the hotline when she is needed, Connie Blake divides her time between doing Medicaid billing for RESA III and supporting ABE assessment specialists who serve 41 counties.

According to Connie, when her days are not filled with work here at RESA III you can find her either training or instructing dog obedience classes. She has been an exhibitor, trainer and instructor for 36 years in the world of dogs.



Benda Helmick

The veteran of the hotline crew is Benda Helmick. She works full-time with Barry Kelly supporting ABE programs in the 10 counties within RESA II and RESA III. According to Benda, “Barry and I have worked together for 19 years - longer than some married couples.” In addition to her day job, Benda also serves as a GED examiner and an External Diploma Program (EDP) assessor for Kanawha County.

She has a B.A. in secondary education from West Virginia State University. Before coming to RESA III, she directed the Sissonville Recreation Center.

At one time, Benda divided her time between the RESA III ABE program and the statewide professional development program. She has often assisted in the registration process at statewide conferences. Benda likes to say, “I knows a little bit about everything - but not a lot about anything.” ■



Connie Blake

Good will . . .

Continued from page 17

class for exemplary student work. At Wyoming County, the students brought covered dishes from home. By doing this, instructor Kim Lane noted, the meal was more of a partnership.

Thanks to the staff at RESA I (Regional Education Service Agency I), the SPOKES program at Raleigh County was able to help a single mother provide holiday presents for her children. Each year, to celebrate the holidays, the RESA staff makes a donation to a local charity. This year, the staff agreed to provide holiday gifts

for a SPOKES student and his/her family. Amber, a single mother of two, and a student in the Raleigh County program was chosen. Amber worked very hard during the program. She earned a *Ready to Work* certificate, and is currently attending New River Community College and Technical School, where she studies medical assisting. RESA staff donated over \$300 to provide for Amber and her children. Instructor Helena Ellis coordinated the Raleigh recognition ceremony. ■

RESA VI Christmas

By Kim McConnaughy, Regional Coordinator of adult education, RESA VI

When you watched your children and/or grandchildren open Christmas gifts a few months ago, did you stop to think about children in your community, throughout the country, or even in other countries throughout the world that didn't have a gift to open or a family with which to enjoy the holidays? Can you remember the smiles, the excitement, and the gratitude that was expressed when *your* child received that special gift on his/her list?

RESA VI's (Regional Education Service Agency VI) Christmas wish was to put smiles on the faces and excitement into the lives of children who are less fortunate...those who don't have nurturing, caring parents or role models; those who come from dysfunctional families; those who are trying to figure out where they fit into a society with so much peer pressure and obstacles to overcome.

Rather than exchanging gifts among ourselves, it was decided that the staff would adopt children from The Children's Home of Wheeling and purchase items that each boy had written on a "wish list." Eleven boys, ranging in age from 11-17, had requested items such as CDs, DVDs, video games, soccer balls, footballs, athletic jerseys, skateboards, sweatshirts (hoodies), ballcaps, and portable CD players. So the "wish lists" were posted at RESA VI and the shopping began!

Gifts began pouring into the office beautifully wrapped and tagged with personalized nametags for each child. Items for the gift-giving project were also donated by the West Liberty State College Athletic



Department and Shirts 'n More in Wheeling, WV. Toboggans, gloves, and socks were also purchased for each boy. One RESA VI employee coordinated efforts to collect books, magazines, and puzzles for the library at The Children's Home.

Once all the gifts were purchased and collected, it took a pick-up truck and a car to transport and deliver them!

In addition to the gifts on the "wish lists," our giving project continued when the RESA VI staff acknowledged our executive director for his dedication and commitment to educating all students within our region and throughout the state of West Virginia. A monetary donation, in the name of Nick Zervos, was presented to the administration of The Children's Home of Wheeling for the purchase of resource materials for the Home's computer/technology lab.

Continued on page 21

Walker and Lane join SPOKES

By Joy Walker, Career Development Consultant, McDowell and Wyoming Counties

On November 8, 2006 Kim Lane and Joy Walker joined the SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Success) program in Wyoming County. Kim replaced Sherry Palmer, who moved to Tennessee, and I accepted a new position as the career development consultant for McDowell and Wyoming Counties.

The initial few weeks were quite an experience, not only for the instructors, but for the students as well. Kim was given only one day with Sherry to “learn the ropes” before she was turned loose, and I was in a newly created position. We had a lot to learn. The students were not accustomed to us, and we were not quite prepared for them. While Sherry had her way of doing things (and she did them very well), Kim and I had our own vision for the class. We borrowed some from Sherry, but we also started making the class our own. Some of our policies went over like a lead balloon - not very well. We limited personal phone calls to lunch and breaks, no cell phones during class and no instant messaging. We were strict with the dress code, start time, and attendance. The students even called me Warden Walker. I may have even

copped an attitude myself. My response was “Whatever!” This was a job-readiness program, and I wanted to provide an example of typical workplace expectations for employees.

Much has changed since November. Now, six months later, we have students that are hesitant to leave us. Some program graduates visit on a regular basis. Several students reported that they were not excited about enrolling in the program, but they were glad they did, and they were saddened at graduation day. It is refreshing and it is a pleasure to work with the students and see them gain confidence and prosper. Kim and I have come a long way, baby! ■

Just when you think you've graduated from the school of experience, someone thinks up a new course.

Mary J. Waldrip

RESA VI Christmas . . .

Continued from page 20

As the RESA VI staff celebrated with a turkey dinner with all the trimmings, we acknowledged the accomplishments and achievements of our children, marriages of staff members, deaths of loved ones and employees, births of new children and/or grandchildren, and other blessings we had received over the past year.

We also shared the legends and origins of Christmas icons such as the poinsettia, mistletoe, holly and the Christmas rose, as well as the 12 days of Christmas. There was not a dry eye in the house when one of the employees shared a personal story about his parents meeting one another in an orphanage as children and how the gift-giving project with The Children's Home had special meaning for him and his family.

Our giving project for these children was meaningful in so many ways and affected all those who took part. Letters of appreciation were received at RESA VI from administration and staff of The Children's Home that brought tears to our eyes as we learned that they had witnessed smiles and much excitement on Christmas morning when those 11 young men received and opened the special gifts on their “wish lists.”

In conclusion, the RESA VI staff's Christmas spirit was exponentially enhanced by the act of giving, not by the act of receiving. . . . which in our hearts and minds hallmarks the RESA VI Christmas of 2006! ■

Thinking it over . . .

Continued from page 15

several motivational strategies. McDowell County instructor, Jared Cantrell, shared internet resources which included some external certifications offered by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). Karen Piotrowski of McDowell County shared stress reduction techniques. Raleigh County instructors provided resume building resources.

The SPOKES mission statement and core values were a product of a democratic process. We each noted the opportunities and challenges that attracted us to the program. We identified the values that make us who we are - the better parts of our nature. We identified the special talents we could bring to the task

at hand. We put it all together, we sorted it out, we negotiated the differences, and now, we begin the process of living by the outcome.

Our values and our mission statement provide a standard for evaluating our decisions and our actions. This is who we are -or, at least, who we want to be; and we will evaluate everything we think or do against this standard. We will post our values and mission everywhere, so we can review them - and ourselves - at any time. ■

Our values are the attributes that we hold in high regard. We seek to reflect these values in all that we do. We evaluate our actions, beliefs and decisions by their reflection of our values.

Accountability

We take responsibility for our actions. Our teachers provide leadership and our students strive for excellence.

Achievement

Our students set and attain goals. We recognize personal achievement.

Respect and Teamwork

We cooperate with our partners to find win-win solutions that better serve our students. There is respect and collaboration among staff and students. We work as a team for a common end result.

Empathy

We always seek to understand individual wants and needs.

Excellence

We expect the best from our students and ourselves.

Flexibility & Individuality

We adapt instructional strategies to meet student needs. We accept individual differences.

Honesty & Integrity

We hold student trust. We model our mission.

Humor

We maintain a cheerful learning environment.

Patience & Loyalty

We remain steadfast for others as they face and overcome challenges.

We practice trust and maintain confidentiality.

Optimism

We maintain a positive attitude in the face of challenges.

SPOKES success in Marion County

I became a student in SPOKES in the middle part of August, 2006. Honestly at first when my caseworker said that I had to do something to keep continuing to get my monthly check, it was either working at the John Manchin Health Center as a janitor or go to SPOKES.

I wasn't interested in going to either one but I did choose SPOKES. At first, I was going or just went when I wanted to go. It was just going to be a waste of my time I thought.

See, I am a single mother of five children, ages 16-1 and I seen that SPOKES or welfare was not going to provide for me and my children so I would keep looking for a job. Sometime I just took advantage of my children being at school or at the daycare and would just sleep in or watch my soap operas, or court programs on television. But, I was determined to get off welfare and get a job.

One day my case worker Karen Mayle told me that if I didn't go to the SPOKES class that she was going to sanction me and that I would lose one-third of my welfare check. Now, let me remind you that I just moved to Fairmont from Ohio, no income and living with my parents. So, I had no choice but to go to SPOKES until I would get a job. That is when Glenn and DeEtta Hayes (Ms. Hayes, is what I have always called her since high school) came into my life.

See, I am the type of person that hated school and didn't want to sit in a boring classroom learning how to fill out an application and to do a resume. Especially, since it wouldn't be the first or last time filling out an application or polishing my résumé or how to talk at an interview.

Like I said, it was wasting my time. Boy, I was wrong! In SPOKES, I learned that the things I had been doing were wrong. In SPOKES I learned how to complete an application correctly, how to answer interview questions responding with the right answers, do cover letters and etc. I was even taught what kind of clothes to wear with different interviews. Glenn and Ms. Hayes really taught me a lot. The both of them were there to help with anything in class and out of class. One day, we were having an in-class activity and I had mentioned to Ms. Hayes that I wanted to go to

school at OIC for Pharmacy Tech. The first things that we had discussed were the pros and cons. That is one thing that I had never done in choosing a career or job. I just did it.

During class we didn't just do job search, we had class participation, and class discussion which were very interesting. Once a week, Angie Diaz from DHHR would come to visit the class and take back to DHHR feedback/messages from us to our caseworker. She would also tell us things that the DHHR would help us with after gaining employment and not receiving a check, things like, gas allowance, clothing vouchers, car repairs, and if you stayed employed for six months or longer and maintain 100 plus hours each month I would receive a bonus. I am on my third month.

“In SPOKES I learned how to complete an application correctly, how to answer interview questions responding with the right answers, do cover letters and etc. I was even taught what kind of clothes to wear with different interviews.”

To make a long story short, I wasn't able to finish my hours with the SPOKES program, because I got a part-time job working at a convenience store. But, I still went to SPOKES class on my days off or before or after I went to work. It was on my own. I was then offered a full-time position and was unable to attend classes any longer. However, I still kept in contact with Glenn and Ms. Hayes.

January 2007, I got a call from Karen Mayle saying that I was going to get a referral to get a car from Good News Garage. (It is a program that helps parents transportation for employment.) She said that Good News was going to interview me and that they would be the ones to determine if I would qualify in receiving the vehicle. I was like what ever and I also thought that the vehicle would

Student writings are the original work of the student and have not been edited.

Continued on page 24

SPOKES success . . .

Continued from page 23

be a piece of junk. But, on January 23, 2007 I was at my mom's house asleep and my mom woke me up to go get my children from day care and in the same sentence you got a 2002 Dodge Caravan. I said Huh! I thought I was dreaming. She was like, you got a 2002 Dodge Caravan. I jumped up, ran down the stairs.

Before I could pick up the van I had to get insurance. DHHR helped in getting the insurance. I had to pay \$1.00 and the Van was mine. I was informed that out of 100 cars I was the only one in our region to get picked to receive one. That day, I went to

pick up the car, it was like being on *The Price Is Right*, I had just won a new car! I had tears in my eyes, because I was so happy.

I thank God first of all and I thank my caseworker, Good News and I went back to SPOKES to tell Glenn and Ms. Hayes and also to thank them. I told them that if it wasn't for them I wouldn't be where I am today, which is the truth.

Again, I am so thankful that I had a chance to be a student in SPOKES. One more thing Glenn is a good baker! ■

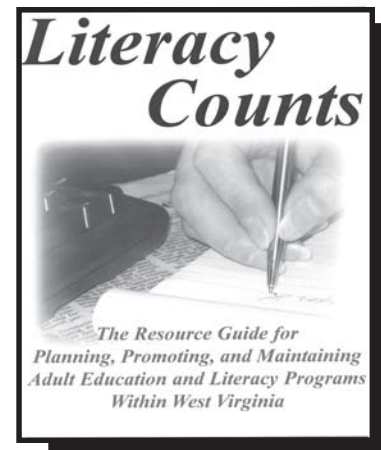
Literacy Counts 2007 available in May

By Kathy Hollingsworth, ABE Public Outreach Coordinator

The 2nd Edition of *Literacy Counts* will be available in May 2007. This publication is a collaborative effort of the Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development, Literacy West Virginia, the Governor's Council on Literacy, the WV Literacy Foundation, and Regional Education Service Agency III.

It is intended as a guide for educators, administrators, business leaders, and community agencies to plan and maintain effective programs for adults.

Literacy Counts is divided into three categories: physical demographics, employment demographics, and educational demographics. Information



contained within these categories can be used for determining the types of programs needed; the best locations for programs; resources available for promoting these programs, and specific target populations in which to direct marketing strategies.

Literacy Counts will be available on <http://www.wvabe.org>. You may request a copy to be mailed to you by calling Vicki Moss at (800) 642-2670. ■

**Deadline for summer/fall issue:
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