

Networks

West Virginia's Adult Education and Literacy Newsletter

Effective transitions to post-secondary education

by Evelyn Phillips, Assistant Coordinator, LAMP
(Partial funding for attending this conference was provided by WVAEA, Inc.)

About one year ago, the ABE Plus (Adult Basic Education) program was added to the services offered by LAMP (Literate Adults Mean Progress) in Summers County to assist adult learners who have a GED® Diploma (General Educational Development) or high school credential with the goal of transitioning into post-secondary education and family-sustaining jobs and careers.

ABE Plus also draws students from the Summers County SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment and Success) program. The fact that all three programs are housed at the Summers County Public Library is a real advantage for staff and learners. The overall collaborative effort between the programs helps make ABE Plus a success.

Adults can receive a range of educational and employment-related services from the different programs in one location. At the LAMP program, ABE Plus students can receive any of the following services: FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) assistance; placement and practice test

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WV Workplace Education Program shares its success and experience

by Dr. Robin Asbury, Deputy Director, WV Workplace Education Program

If you drive up a winding road just outside Welch, WV you'll come to a virtual city on a hill. From the top of the leveled-off mountain, the view is breathtaking. Equally as impressive are the vast structures that make up the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI-McDowell).

The FCI and its accompanying prison camp were officially opened at a ribbon-cutting and recognition ceremony on November 19, 2010. The road to the ribbon-cutting was at times as circuitous as the road to FCI-McDowell, but the collaboration among many entities made FCI-McDowell a reality.

The West Virginia Workplace Education Program, a component of the state's adult basic education (ABE) program, was a key player in the Talent Team formed to

address the pre-hire training needs for potential applicants for the Federal Bureau of Prisons jobs in McDowell County with the construction of the federal correctional institution in that county.

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First Row: Robin Morgan, R1 WIB; Robin Asbury, WV Workplace Education; Tina White, WV Workplace Education. Second Row: Henry J. Lappin, Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons; Cathi Litcher, BOP Site Activation Coordinator; Warden Kenneth Cauley, FCI-McDowell; Richard Browning, Member-WV House of Delegates.

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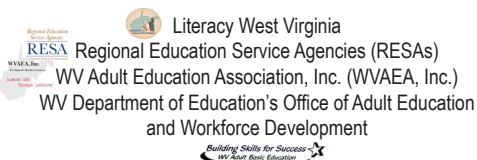
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From the Editor

Spring brings out in me what some of those who know me best would say “my compulsive side.” I get this strong urge to begin cleaning, freshening, and organizing everything in my path. It is an exciting time - a time to discard what is no longer needed or useful, rediscover things that may have been forgotten, and create new and exciting plans for the months ahead. Spring also signifies new beginnings and growth. So, as spring begins to blossom around you, don't pass up this opportunity for you to blossom as well. Take time to re-evaluate and decide what needs cleaned out, freshened up, or tossed out, and let your ideas and creativity enhance both your personal and professional lives. Now sit back, relax, and enjoy this issue of *Networks*.



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WV Workplace Education Program . . .

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The Talent Team, headed by Cathy Litcher, site activation coordinator for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, was composed of the WV Workplace Education Program, Region 1 Workforce Investment Board (WIB), New River Community and Technical College, Southern WV Community and Technical College, economic development representatives from Wyoming, Mercer, Raleigh, and McDowell Counties, and local technical education representatives.

“Dr. Asbury traveled to Berlin, New Hampshire . . . to provide train-the-trainer sessions for personnel who would be using the pre-hire training modules with potential employees for FCI-Berlin, the new correctional institution being constructed there.”

Two representatives from the WV Workplace Education Program were privileged to join with California and New Hampshire at a week-long training at the Central Processing Unit in Grande Prairie, Texas in November, 2007. At this training, the state representatives learned what kinds of jobs would be available at the FCIs, what qualifications were needed, and how to apply using USAJobs and the BOP (Bureau of Prisons) website.

Dr. Robin Asbury, the deputy director of the West Virginia Workplace Education Program, developed training modules to walk applicants through the process.

Tina White of the WV Workplace Education Program worked closely with the Region 1 WIB, the WorkForce WV Career Centers, and the community colleges to arrange the logistics for the classes, publicize

them, and enroll learners. Ms. White also handled publicity for events scheduled to bring information to the general public about BOP jobs and FCI-McDowell, particularly when Cathy Litcher and her associates visited the region.

A newsletter, *Correction Connection*, was sent to all stakeholders to keep them up-to-date on progress. Video teleconferences with Cathy Litcher and the Talent Team were held on a monthly basis.

Over three years in the planning and implementation, the BOP pre-hire process resulted in an astounding 80 percent of the new hires at FCI-McDowell coming from the four-county region.

The warden at FCI-McDowell, Kenny Cauley, as well as the director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Harley G. Lappin, praised the quality of applicants and the ease in hiring qualified employees because of the pre-hire training. “The BOP’s goal for activating institutions is to draw about 60 percent of new hires from the local commuting area.”

As a result of the West Virginia Talent Team Partnership, FCI-McDowell far exceeded the BOP’s goal with 80 percent of the 155 new hires being from McDowell and surrounding counties.

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WV Workplace Education Program . . .

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“Together, we accomplished a remarkable feat which I am truly proud to have been part of,” Warden Cauley remarked. The ribbon-cutting and recognition ceremony for FCI-McDowell was held on November 19, 2010. At this event, the Talent Team, and especially the WV Workplace Education Program and Region 1 WIB were singled out for recognition for their contributions to the successful opening of the facility.

Dr. Asbury was invited by Green Mountain Community College in Berlin, New Hampshire to provide

train-the-trainer sessions for personnel who would be using the pre-hire training modules with potential employees for FCI-Berlin, the new correctional institution being constructed there.

Dr. Asbury traveled to Berlin, New Hampshire in November, 2010 to provide an overview of the materials, the USAJobs website and process, and the BOP website and job application process. She also shared best practices and lessons learned from West Virginia’s experience.

Have you visited the WVABE Wiki recently?

by Cathy Shank, WVABE Professional Development Coordinator

West Virginia adult basic education (WVABE) professional development created the WVABE wiki to provide personnel an online place to exchange information and ideas. A wiki (wick’-e) is a type of website that allows anyone to add or edit content via a browser interface.

Anyone can visit and view the WVABE wiki to see all the great resources found there. To participate in discussions and add content, you need to become a member of the wiki. At the home page at <http://wvabe.wetpaint.com>, you can “Sign up” to become a member in the upper right corner.

After you sign up and sign in, you can experiment with adding a photo image and a profile so that other participants will recognize you (like on Facebook). If you can’t remember the URL for the WVABE wiki, it is easy to find by using Google or another search engine to search for “wvabe”.

The home page contains a variety of information regarding WVABE professional development (PD). There are links to the Calendar of Events, to certification information, online courses, etc. In addition, many of the PD forms frequently needed by instructors can be found at this site (request for credit, class visit, distance education certification, requests for credit for core follow-up activities, etc.).

Trainers and coordinators can also find the sign-in sheet and evaluation forms needed at WVABE workshops.

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effective transitions . . .

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assistance (ACT, SAT, Compass, and occupational practice tests); KeyTrain®; campus tours of area colleges; assistance with college curriculum; and support with college coursework. To acquire up-to-date information and practical skills that we can use in our program to further help adults succeed in ABE Plus, I attended the conference on Effective Transitions in Adult Education last November in Providence, Rhode Island.

In addition to the wealth of information and ideas I acquired, I came away from the conference with an awareness of how crucial our roles as adult educators are in encouraging adults to enroll, and giving them the foundation they need to succeed.

For many, post-secondary education is the pathway to the dignity of gainful employment with a living wage. According to Dr. Margaret Patterson, research director of GED® Testing Services (GEDTS), 65 percent of GED passers identify further education as a reason for taking the GED® Tests.

As we find ourselves in the 21st Century, we are called to encourage adults to set the expectations for their own educational achievements and employment goals higher than ever before. This will not only benefit the individual learner but also will help create the educated, well-trained workforce that employers and our economy need.

Conference presenters recommended that adult basic education students who want to go on to post-secondary

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education strive to obtain considerably higher scores on the GED® Tests than required to pass.

While the achievement of higher passing scores on the GED® Tests and its various sections likely signals a learner's better preparation for college courses, the intensive tutoring that college transition programs such as ABE Plus can provide GED passers over a relatively short period of time can help them succeed in post-secondary programs.

According to findings from GEDTS in 2003, 41 percent of GED passers that year had *enrolled* in post-secondary education by the end of 80 months after earning their diploma; but only 11 percent had *graduated* from higher education by the end of the 80 months.

Suggestions for encouraging GED graduates to enroll and for helping them persist and succeed in post-secondary programs include the following:

1. Ask a former GED graduate who has graduated from college to come to your program to talk with the other students about his or her college experience and to encourage the students to go on to post-secondary education.
2. Contact a local college and arrange to have "College for a Day." GED students and graduates visit the college to meet with students who are taking courses in a field of interest. Give GED students and graduates a syllabus from one of the college student's classes and permit them to attend a class that day.
3. Ask a student who's been enrolled in college for a while to mentor a newly-enrolled student.

Three websites are excellent resources for those involved in adult education who are, or will be, helping learners transition to higher education.

The first is www.collegetransition.org. This website provides resources and information about membership in the National College Transitions Network.

The second website is www.collegeforadults.org. Here you will find guidance and information related to career planning, college selection, and the application process. All aspects of educational and career exploration and planning are thoroughly covered.

Several useful downloadable worksheets are available at the website: Things I Have Done, Skills Identification, Occupational Exploration, Career and Educational Planning, and Occupational Exploration. Sections on financial aid and budgeting, as well as an academic skills review and brush-up, are included.

A similar website worth exploring is www.cfww.org.

Along with our adult learners, adult educators are being challenged to meet higher expectations. If we take advantage of the excellent resources available, rely on each other as our support network, and share ideas and practices, I am confident that we will meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

"Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one."

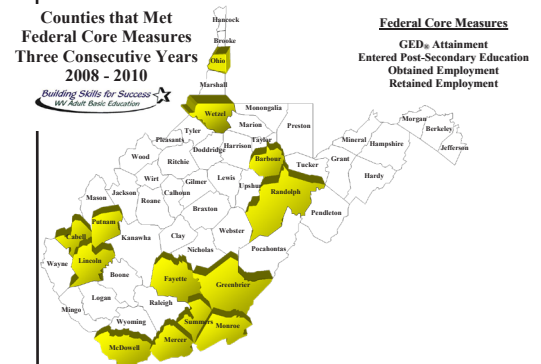
Malcolm Forbes

Congratulations for a job well done!

Each year, at least 60 percent of the students enrolled in adult basic education (ABE) programs must achieve their goals in the areas of obtaining a GED® Diploma, entering a college or technical education program, obtaining employment, and/or retaining employment.

Congratulations to the following counties that have consistently met these Federal Core Measures for three consecutive years – 2008, 2009, and 2010:

Barbour
Cabell
Fayette
Greenbrier
Lincoln
McDowell
Mercer
Monroe
Ohio
Putnam
Randolph
Summers



have you visited the WVABE Wiki . . .

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Once you are at the home page, you can navigate to any of the other connected wiki pages for the site by looking at the navigation box on the left side. Here are a few of the pages that might be of interest:

- **Resources for New WVABE Instructors:**

<http://wvabe.wetpaint.com/page/Resources+for+New+WVABE+Instructors>

At this page, coordinators and peer trainers can find all the pre-service training documents used with new instructors and a link to the request for training. New instructors can find links to resources for further study.

- **Resources for WVABE Core Sessions:**

<http://wvabe.wetpaint.com/page/Resources+for+WVABE+Core+Sessions>

From this page WVABE personnel can find links to resources for all the new core follow-up activities.

- **Lesson Plans and Ideas:**

<http://wvabe.wetpaint.com/page/Lesson+Plans+and+Ideas>

At this page, practitioners can share their lesson plans and ideas with one another. Scroll down to the Attachments Section at the very bottom of this page and see some of the lesson plans that other WVABE folks are using that you can adapt for your own program. You can download their files and modify them to suit your needs. If you have something to add, please “Apply to be a Writer” and you can share your lesson plans and resources too.

- **OPT Orientation:**

<http://wvabe.wetpaint.com/page/Official+GED+Practice+Test+%28OPT%29+Orientation>

At this page, practitioners share their ideas for managing the influx of students with a goal to take the GED[®] Official Practice Test (OPT). Again, there are many useful attachments to view and download. Instructors from around the state have added resources they have created (letters to students, OPT Score report forms, a PowerPoint presentation for leading an orientation session, and more).

There are a number of other wiki pages to explore. Once you have become a member, each time you visit you will need to sign in so that you can add questions or comments. As a member, you can set your preferences to receive email updates when someone comments on one of the pages that interest you or you can receive Weekly Digests regarding content on the wiki that has been added or changed. You can also “Apply to be a Writer” and you will be able to edit wiki pages, add threads, and post attachments.

After, investigating the wiki, think about how wikis can be developed and used in your program by you and your students. Wikis in Education, <http://wikisineducation.wetpaint.com>, is a site where you can develop a free educational wiki page for your class.

“ . . . think about how wikis can be developed and used in your program by you and your students. Wikis in Education . . . is a site where you can develop a free educational wiki page for your class.”

WVAEA, Inc. holds election

by Kathy Hollingsworth, Director

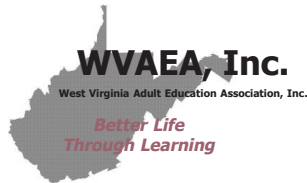
Congratulations to Christina Harper, newly elected president for the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.). Christina is secretary for the SPOKES/Assessment program housed at RESA 3, and has served as vice-president of WVAEA, Inc., co-chaired the conference committee, and has handled registration for the annual fall conference for many years.

Herb Rothwell, Cabell County ABE instructor, peer trainer, and mentor was elected vice-president. Herb has been a member of WVAEA, Inc. for many years where he has held various positions including board of director, chair of several committees, and a valuable conference committee member.

Three new board of directors were also elected. Congratulations to Denise Aiken, career development consultant; Kim McConnaughy, past president of WVAEA, Inc., and regional coordinator of adult education; and Nick Zervos, executive director of RESA 6.

The new members of the board development committee are Tyann Douglas, instructional/curriculum coordinator for SPOKES; Jolie Lewis, SPOKES instructor; and Donna Metz, principal of the Marion County Adult and Community Education Center and WVAEA, Inc. board development chair.

These new officers and board members will be joining Pam Bryan, secretary; Marie Bias-Jones, treasurer; and Bonnie Herrold, Helena Ellis, Paul Jarrett, John Holmes, Paula Gould, and Judy Seaman who are existing members of the board of directors.



Be sure to mark your calendar to join us for *Transforming Futures . . . It Begins Here*, this year's fall professional development conference sponsored by the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.). It is scheduled for October 25-27, 2011 at Stonewall Resort. More information can be found at www.wvaea.org.

If you are an ABE peer trainer, STAR mentor, AEMIS technical assistant, and/or regional/state coordinator, don't forget the summer conference sponsored by the Career and Technical Education Association, July 25-26, 2011 at the Charleston Civic Center.

Conferences DO have a purpose

by Kathy Hollingsworth, WVABE Public Outreach Coordinator

Have you ever wondered why there are so many conferences?
Why do we take teachers away from their classrooms for so many days?
And the money?! It is so expensive!

I have often asked myself these same questions. So I asked participants of the 2010 annual fall professional development conference to tell us what they learned and how they used this new knowledge in their classrooms.

Here's what three of them had to say:

"I attended a wonderful session on Comic Strip creation with Anne Meadows. The website, www.toondoo.com was used for this presentation. Students can compose their own comic strips for a variety of contexts (prewriting, pre- and post-reading activities, response to literature, and so on). The organizers focus on the key elements of comic strips by allowing students to choose backgrounds, characters, and props, as well as to compose related dialogue. This versatile tool can be used by students from kindergarten through adult, for a wide array of writing projects. After completing their comic strip, students have the ability to print out and illustrate their final versions for feedback and assessment. Furthermore, comics created can also be manipulated into comic books. Students that may not like to write would tend to benefit from this free online application."

Jack Price, Berkeley County

"While I am at a loss to write an actual story on the sessions I attended, I will tell you a few things I truly appreciated about one in particular: Learning Disabilities and Explicit Instruction.

As silly as it might sound, one of the most useful things I learned was what a "parking lot" is during instruction. I work for a literacy agency and I believe that this will come in handy when I am dealing with students who stray from the subject at hand.

Also, I appreciated the presenters. They were knowledgeable and demonstrated and exhibited the instructional strategies being taught. Most of all, they were patient, engaging, and affirming. We may not be ABE students, but we are still adults in a learning situation. I felt like I could participate and share without criticism, in a non-threatening environment. I can only hope that I can exhibit some of the same qualities as I work with my individual students.

Most of all, the content was relevant and useful. We not only learned about learning disabilities and explicit instruction, but we watched and listened as they demonstrated; we paired and worked together; and we presented our findings and insights.

I did not write down the name of the presenters, but at the very least they should know what an impact they made on me in such a short period of time. They deserve credit for an A+ learning session!"

Carrie Edgell, Tri-State Literacy Council, Cabell County

(The presenters were Elizabeth Jarrett and Sandra Adkins)

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conferences . . .

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"I read your message on the listserv and just HAD to write something because I learned so much – especially from the other teachers . . .

The 2010 WVAEA, Inc. fall conference at Stonewall was a fantastic experience for me! It was well-organized, and the instructors of the courses presented information that was applicable to our classroom. In addition, I was inspired by the other teachers' stories and tips that sparked my interest to try these ideas with our students.

I combined one teacher's idea of reading aloud to her students with our students' lack of having read many of the classics in high school.

I've started to read aloud a chapter a day to the students, explaining reasons why we're doing it: to develop critical thinking skills, to learn how to listen, to use imaginations, to learn how to enjoy reading for pleasure, to relax, to show them that their children will learn to

love reading if they read to them, and to create special bonding time with their children.

It takes just a few minutes to read a chapter a day, and I hope that this peaks their interest enough to desire to know the ending of the story and stay engaged for those few minutes.

Another idea I had was I set up a puzzle table in our classroom. I found a fish puzzle. Because we have some fish tanks and special fish friends in the room, fish seemed to be an appropriate theme. (See cover story on the summer-fall 2010 issue of Networks, Using Humor as a Teaching Tool).

I placed the pieces on the table, and introduced the table to be used whenever any student had a spare moment, or felt a need to 'take a walk around the room' break.

At the local dollar store, I located a box of seven wooden brain buster wooden puzzles. I scattered them around the tables to discourage idle time and to encourage thinking and

problem-solving. They're fun and frustrating, but our students need to learn how to have constructive fun and how to finish what they start – even when it's difficult.

In one session, I learned that the teacher sets the tone for the classroom, but our students help mentor each other. We discussed how we can establish norms for civility and courtesy that build respect, yet we can still have fun in the classroom while we learn."

Susan Ellison, Wood County

Other comments:

"It was great to get out of the classroom, and come to interact with people doing similar work and experiencing similar challenges – that is important!"

"Made new friends. Learned new things. Gained a few pounds. A working vacation. Loved the atmosphere."

"It was great to have a chance to meet our leaders from Charleston."

Now when I begin to question the value of conferences, I think of stories and comments like these and never again ask
 "Why?"

The fall professional development conference is sponsored each year by the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.) and is made possible through partial funding and in-kind services provided by the Department of Education and RESA. Additional funding is solicited from private foundations and organizations that support adult basic education. Any profits made from this conference are "recycled" back into the ABE/literacy programs via Student Support grants for continuing education; Program Supplement grants for supplies; Special Event grants; and Professional Development grants. In 2010, WVAEA, Inc. provided partial funding to three ABE/literacy instructors to attend national conferences. These experiences are highlighted below and on pages 1, 8, 9, and 12.

From ballpoint pens to smart boards

by Julie Hagan, WVABE Technology Integration Specialist

(Partial funding for attending this conference was provided by WVAEA, Inc. "Thank you to WVAEA, Inc. for giving me the assistance to go to this conference.")

"Ballpoint pens will be the ruin of education in our country. Students use these devices and then throw them away. The American virtues of thrift and frugality are being discarded. Businesses and banks will never allow such expensive luxuries." – Federal Teacher, 1950

I recently attended and presented at the Technology Literacy Conference at the Beach organized by Horry County Schools Adult and Community Education. The conference was located in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Integration of

technology into curriculum was the primary focus of the conference.

The common theme was that the world is constantly changing, which means students are constantly

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from ballpoint pens . . .

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changing. To be successful in the classroom, teaching methods must evolve. Methods of the past will not be successful because today's students are wired differently. According to the Mindset List for the Class of 2011, students graduating college this year have always known the World Wide Web to exist.

The problem is not that students are changing. The problem is that not all teachers are willing to change to keep up with the students.

While the K-12 system needs to change to be able to compete with other countries, ABE (adult basic education) needs to change too. To adequately prepare adult students for today's workforce, they need to be comfortable working with technology.

Technology in the adult classroom does not mean students doing independent computer work. It means

having students create a video to show an understanding of a topic. It means using the Smart Board to teach a lesson. It means taking a test with responders. The average adult attention span is 15-20 minutes, so it is essential to use the technology that engrosses the students of today to engage them in learning.

One common theme in several sessions I sat through was to encourage students to question information and media online. Is this information accurate? Who put this information online? Why did they put it online?

With the abundance of resources available on the Internet, it is crucial that students learn how to filter out bad information. Another presenter suggested adding "S" (Still) and "H" (How) to the classic KWL (Know What you want to Learn) chart. The extra columns ask

students what they still need to know and how they can find that information. This promotes learning beyond the end of the lesson.

This conference ended with the same challenge that most conferences do – take classrooms into the 21st Century. The problem is that when teachers go back to their classrooms, they fall back into their old, comfortable routines.

As educators, we need to leave our comfort zones. We need to try new methods and new technology in our classrooms. Using technology and creativity, we need to give our students the power to move up through the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

"Do not confine your children to your own learning, for they were born in another time." – Chinese Proverb

Introducing Edmodo - the new social media network

by Jack Price, WVABE Technology Integration Specialist, RESA 8
(Partial funding for attending this conference was provided by WVAEA, Inc.)

Recently, I attended the Florida Education Technology Conference in Orlando, Florida along with representatives from 49 states and 13 countries. This conference is one of the largest and most successful conferences in the United States. The conference program is designed so educators and administrators have an opportunity to learn how to integrate different technologies across curricula – from kindergarten to college – while being exposed to the latest hardware, software, and successful strategies on student technology use.

The conference provided more than 200 concurrent sessions which focused on integrating current and emerging

technologies, safety and security, social networking and collaboration into the curriculum. Nearly 70 professional development, hands-on, workshops were made available to attendees of the conference.

A mind boggling 500 companies - Discovery Education, Promethean, Epson, and Smart, among others - filled the exhibit hall providing attendees an opportunity to preview and purchase the latest educational technology hardware and software to enhance teaching and learning at all levels.

Many vendors held on-the-spot demonstrations and training sessions from their product line. These companies had hundreds of giveaways. I won an Epson all-in-one interactive whiteboard!

Something new this year was the inclusion of Edmodo <http://www.edmodo.com/FETC>. This new social media network is devoted to classroom education, allowing teachers to communicate with their students about assignments and with their fellow educators about teaching techniques and best practices.

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Good news for the american worker - good news for WV

by Liz Huntington, SPOKES Instructor, RESA 8

(Partial funding for attending this conference was provided by WVAEA, Inc. "I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to attend this conference. Thank you very much!")

Can you imagine a scenario in which big industry, academic economists, blue collar workers, and tree-hugging environmentalists sit down together to figure out how to make green thinking put the working people of America back to work? War of the Worlds? Fantasy Island? Or maybe the 4th annual Good Jobs, Green Jobs National Conference, held this past February in Washington, DC.

For the past four years, the annual Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference has brought together leaders from labor, government, the environmental movement, business, and industry to discuss the future of sustainable, environmentally clean industry in the 21st Century. The report from the experts in their fields is good:

renewable energy, clean technologies, and sustainable environmental practices mean long-term, sustainable economic development for American workers. It isn't a question of if; it is a matter of when.

In our SPOKES classes (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment and Success), we are constantly urging our students to invest in additional education and training.

There are many vocational programs as well as community college certification courses available. The big question is what industries will make it through the economic spin cycle of the past decade? What kind

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introducing Edmoto . . .

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Jack Price adorning his WV attire at the Florida Education Technology Conference.

Attending this conference was very meaningful to my professional development and to keep myself current with the latest technological advancements. As a technology integration specialist, I am often asked for my opinion regarding certain technologies. Being exposed to the most current innovations at this conference will help me make informed decisions and help others to do the same.

WVABE launches CORE follow-up activities

by Cathy Shank, WVABE Professional Development Coordinator

The West Virginia adult basic education (WVABE) professional development program has launched an effort to add practical follow-up activities to every face-to-face CORE training workshop offered.

The purpose of these activities is to motivate practitioners to act on ideas learned at professional development workshops and to find meaningful ways to apply concepts and strategies in their own programs. Each activity also asks practitioners to post their ideas and comments to the WVABE wiki. This provides the opportunity to create an online community for sharing ideas and strategies.

CORE professional development trainings cover important concepts that all practitioners need. These required follow-up activities will help to assure that practitioners apply new concepts and will reward them with CORE professional development credit earned on their own - no travel required.

Eventually there will be a required follow-up activity for each of the face-to-face CORE professional development training workshops offered.

Below are the available follow-up activities for which instructors may earn credit if they have already completed the face-to-face training. Ultimately, **all WVABE instructors will be required to complete the follow-up core activities.**

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good news . . .

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of education and training will best prepare our participants for the economic development that will be happening here, where they live in West Virginia?

This year's conference was hosted and funded by the BlueGreen Alliance Foundation, a nonprofit affiliate of the BlueGreen Alliance, a national partnership of 10 major US labor unions and four of America's most influential environmental organizations.

The mission of this national partnership is to expand the number and quality of jobs in the green economy. The common vision is that developing opportunities for both labor and industry in clean and renewable energy technologies creates long-term, sustainable, and healthy growth for American workers.

The conference presented an impressive array of workshops for participants, ranging from how a green

economy impacts global warming to how to bring young people into the blue/green revolution through innovative vocational training programs.

Of particular interest to me, representing adult education in West Virginia, were the sessions that addressed opportunity for women in the emerging green technology trades, green job development in low-income communities, and promising development in the coal-mining regions of our own state. (Please see the related article in this issue on page 14, *Good Jobs, Green Jobs on the Horizon for West Virginians.*)

The most significant take-away for me was the sense that the people who really call the shots and run the show in terms of where American industry (and therefore American labor) is heading, agree: the future for everyone concerned is in environmentally clean and sustainable technologies.

Those of us who work to prepare people for the opportunity to have satisfying, healthy, and economically sustainable lives can take heart: such opportunity exists and is growing, one community and one training program at a time. Our new task, which is really the same old task it has always been, is to guide people in our programs to the best possible investments of their time and efforts.

From the standpoint of the emerging green economy, this means stressing math and science skills, vocational training in renewable energy technologies, and especially encouraging women to consider getting training in these areas.

For more information about the BlueGreen Alliance, its membership, and current developments in creating a healthy and sustainable green economy, please visit www.bluegreenalliance.org.

The new adventures of Debra Kimbler

Debra Kimbler has been promoted to Assistant Director for GED® Testing for the West Virginia Department of Education's Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development.

In the fall of 2010, Debra began working tirelessly with GED® Testing Services (GEDTS) and the West Virginia PreK-12 administrators to determine the most effective way to implement the GED® Option Pathway into high schools throughout the state.

In November, 2010 the Option Pathway program was launched. To date, it has been introduced in 33 counties and is currently serving 252 students with a passing rate of 93 percent.



The GED® Office will implement the Option Pathway in the remaining counties during FY'12; and it is also working closely with the West Virginia ABE program and the West Virginia Adult Education Association (WVAEA, Inc.) to

provide the necessary training for teachers. This training will assure that the Option Pathway instructors have the knowledge, skills, tools, and competencies needed for success in the Option Pathway classroom.

Debra is also continuing the duties she held as state GED® administrator. Even with this new position and responsibilities, her main focus will continue to be to uphold the integrity of the GED® Testing Program.

She is pleased that her office is now able to offer another opportunity for West Virginians to pave their way to educational and employment success.

New opportunity for former adult education coordinator and GED® examiner

With the implementation of the GED® Option Pathway and the reorganization of the WV Department of Education Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development's GED® Office, a new opportunity was created for someone who was up for a challenge.

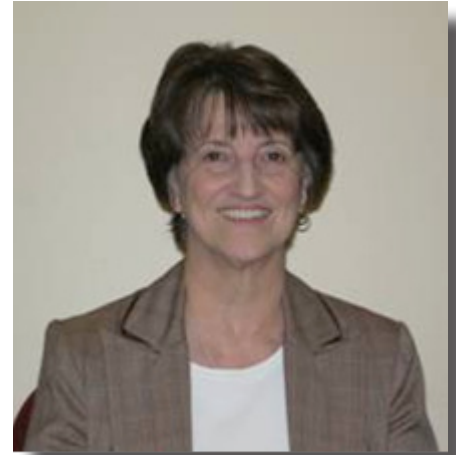
When this new job was posted, Linda Berlin, former Marshall County Schools adult education coordinator and chief GED® examiner, was at a crossroads in her career trying to decide if it was time to retire or to continue 'one more year'.

As she read the job requirements and qualifications, she thought "I would love to work with this new and exciting state program. I have experience in all of the areas it encompasses and I would love to be in on the beginning and have

a chance to do something different, and to help make a difference in the lives of students across the state."

So she applied, and on January 18, 2011 she found herself in Charleston in her new position to coordinate the Option Pathway program across West Virginia. She is currently in the process of visiting the pilot sites to evaluate the success of the program and provide technical assistance as needed. She works with county team members to develop ways to make the programs even more effective next year.

The program has a 93 percent passing rate which in itself proves its success. But Linda says that the students are the real successes. "It has been amazing to visit Option sites and listen to the stories from the students themselves.



These are students who had given up on themselves, who would have been high school dropouts, and now are succeeding and loving school."

To date, 33 counties have implemented an Option Pathway program, and the goal for FY'12 is to have the remaining counties become part of the team.

New assistant completes the GED® team



Charity Sheffield became a part of the GED® team on March 17, 2011. Her duties include education verification, processing transcript requests for GED graduates, and database management.

Previously, Charity worked as a research and evaluation assistant for a local non-profit organization where her duties consisted of data collection,

data analyses, and report writing for a number of summative and formative evaluations.

This new position is a very strong fit for her skill set. She has years of administrative experience and enjoys working in a capacity that helps others.

Charity plans to complete her bachelor's degree in Psychology. Her professional goals are to become trained as a GED® examiner and continue to learn about the policies and procedures of the GED® Office.

"Her professional goals are to become trained as a GED® examiner and continue to learn about the policies and procedures of the GED® Office."

"I could not be happier with my new colleagues. My mentor has been outstanding and has made my transition to the GED® Office a wonderful experience."

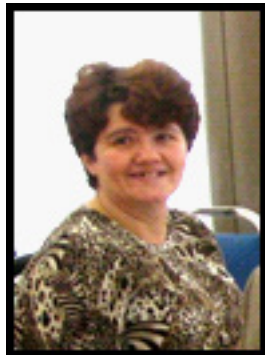
SPOKES promotes employment success during recognition event

by Joan Simonetti Beck, Instructor

(Partial funding for this ceremony was provided by WVAEA, Inc.)

(This article was reprinted in part with permission from the Wheeling News Register, Friday, February 11, 2011)

The Brooke-Hancock SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment Success) Program held a recognition event on Thursday, December 16, 2010 at West Virginia Northern Community College. The event was sponsored by DHHR (Department of Health and Human Resources), RESA 6 (Regional Education Service Agency), West Virginia Northern Community College, and the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.).



Keynote speaker, Arleta Odgen

Kim McConnaughy, coordinator of adult education, RESA 6, headquartered in Wheeling, WV, opened the recognition program by saying, "Teamwork is essential in today's work environment. We are fortunate to be able to muster the combined resources of DHHR, WorkForce WV, RESA 6, WV Northern Community College, and many other partners at the county, regional, and state levels to support SPOKES."

The team of Joan Simonetti Beck, instructor, and Denise Aiken, career development consultant, recognized over 30 current and former program

participants for their achievements in such areas as: employment; professional advancement on the job; successful attainment of the GED[®] Diploma; pursuit of advanced collegiate or vocational training; as well as local, state, and national certification.

"Program participants capitalize on a variety of developmental opportunities to refresh and build skills," stated Ms. Beck. Opportunity for achievement includes: state certifications in Job Readiness and Career Readiness; Customer Service certification; and local recognition for teamwork, community or special projects, and related achievements and contributions.

Ms. Aiken added, "Such accomplishments, when added to a resume, factually illustrate the talents and assets that a SPOKES graduate can offer a prospective employer."

The key note speaker, Ms. Arleta Odgen, a 2008 SPOKES graduate, provided a motivating description of her journey and transformation from joblessness to employment.

She shared highlights of her personal and professional growth and triumphs resulting in enhanced self-confidence, fulfillment, and career advancement. Her speech illustrated how long-term accomplishments and achievements can be obtained through determination, hard work, and successful application of personal and professional resources. She is also a mentor to others who are just starting their careers.



DHHR family support supervisor, Valerie Wells

Valerie Wells, DHHR family support supervisor, stated, "The program accepts participants through referrals from the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources as well as WorkForce West Virginia, promoting re-employment, long term job success, and continuous skill-building through education to meet employer needs in the tri-state region."

SPOKES serves a diverse socio-economic population. Participants are encouraged to develop a fusion of information, communication, and technology-based job skills needed in today's job market, requiring an integration of talents, skills, and self-discovery.

Ms. Beck added, "We are always searching for ways to involve our students." For example, current and former students assisted us with this event, including: event planning, press releases, photography, as well as the editing of publications.

In summary, SPOKES gives participants resume-building as well as self-fulfilling opportunities to support the achievement of their personal and professional goals.

MCACEC promotes self-esteem

by Donna Metz, Principal, Marion County Adult and Community Education Center

The Marion County SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment and Success) program through the past nine years has proven to be unique beyond the call of duty. The program is a job-readiness program, but the instructors Glenn Tacy and DeEtta Hayes find pleasure and satisfaction in giving to their students more than the modules that are required by the program.

These instructors have created “The Boutique” which is a cloak room full of nice clothing that has been donated to the Marion County SPOKES program for both men and women.



The “Boutique” where clothes are donated and students can pick and choose new outfits.

This clothing is used for job interviews as well as casual clothing that the students may need for everyday wear. Many students have been provided with warm jackets, sweaters, boots, shoes, work clothes, and holiday outfits.

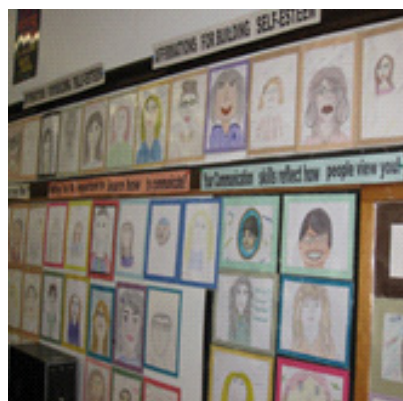
The Boutique has been an added treasure for the SPOKES program. The students are pleased with their new outfits, which in turn helps them gain employment and boosts their self-esteem.

Speaking of boosting self-esteem, the SPOKES program is also very proud of its “Refrigerator Wall.”

Each student who enrolls in the SPOKES class is given a lesson on self-esteem. In that lesson the instructors talk about how each of us see ourselves, and what we know about ourselves.

They demonstrate this knowledge by drawing a picture of themselves and then that picture is put on the wall, which is the instructor’s “Refrigerator Wall.”

Glenn Tacy says, “Just like many of our refrigerators at home are covered with our children’s drawings, the “Wall” is one way to show our adult students that they and their expression of how they see themselves are of value to us, fellow students, and members of their families.” Glenn and DeEtta are always pleased when the students return to visit and they look for their pictures, or are eager to show their picture to their children.



The “Refrigerator Wall” where students draw a self portrait of themselves which is then displayed on the Wall for students, teachers, and visitors at MCACEC to view.

new CORE . . .

Continued from page 9

For each activity, there is an online request for credit that describes what must be done and how to submit it for credit. The WVABE wiki now has a resource page for each of the CORE sessions that has a follow-up activity. You can see these resource pages in the Navigation Box on the left side of the WVABE wiki home page at <http://wvabe.wetpaint.com>. (See the article on page 3 of this issue.)

Instructors who have already completed one of the following CORE sessions MUST complete the required follow-up activity for additional CORE credit - **even seasoned instructors who took the CORE courses long ago must now complete the follow-up activities.**

- [CSI: Classroom Strategies for Instruction \(Formerly WORK 201\)](#)
- [GRASP: Guide for Retention and Student Persistence \(Formerly MGMT 200\)](#)
- [READ 1: Alphabetic-Phonemic Awareness and Phonics \(Formerly LIT 100\)](#)
- [READ 2: Vocabulary Development and Fluency Skills Strategies](#)
- [READ 3: Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction](#)

The links above take you to resource pages at the wiki for each of the CORE sessions listed. Discussion threads at the bottom of each wiki resource page allow practitioners to see what others have shared. The wiki resource pages will describe the follow-up assignment and provide links to resources given in the training workshops and/or needed to complete the assignments.

For more information, contact Cathy Shank, 1-800-257-3723 ext. 112 or cshank@access.k12.wv.us.

Good jobs, green jobs on the horizon for West Virginia

by Liz Huntington, SPOKES Instructor, RESA 8

In Williamson WV, where coal is a traditional foundation for both livelihood and lifestyle, there's a new favorite color in town and it's green. As workers everywhere are struggling to stay afloat in stormy economic times, labor interests and advocates for sustainable development have joined forces to bring new growth and opportunity to places like Williamson.

One example of what diverse interests can accomplish when they find common ground is the recent installation of 46 high-performance SolarWorld solar electric power panels on the roof of the Williamson Family Heath Center in downtown Williamson.

The Williamson solar energy installation on the health clinic roof was a collaboration effort between the Williamson Redevelopment Authority (WRA), Mountain View Solar & Wind, SolarWorld, and the JOBS Project. Mountain View Solar & Wind is a renewable energy installation firm based in Berkeley Springs, WV. The JOBS Project is a nonprofit advocacy organization that promotes sustainable energy markets in Central Appalachia.

The installation of these solar panels in a town known as the "Heart of the Billion Dollar Coalfield" is significant. According to the JOBS Project, and other advocates for investing in renewable energy, this is where the jobs of the future are going to be, as communities all across the country begin to blend renewable-energy resources with the traditional technologies that rely on the coal and oil industries.

One of the most promising areas of developing markets and training for skilled workers is wind and solar power. Mountain View co-president, Mike McKechnie, underscored the importance

of hiring and training workers in communities where solar systems are installed. "As the industry continues to grow, we're going to train more people. Mingo County is full of skilled electricians who used to work in the mines. I'm glad we can use those skills while paying Americans good wages locally - up to \$45 an hour for skilled electricians."

Eric Mathis, president and CEO of the JOBS Project, is no stranger to working class values or life in a small town. He grew up in a trailer in the outskirts of Winston Salem, NC and knows first-hand about the pride and also the despair of working men and women who want both a dependable income and a healthy, sustainable life style.

"Change makes sense if it can put money in your pocket at the end of the day," says Mathis. "The goal is to connect WV communities and workers to competitive markets and in the growing renewable energy industry. Part of that linking process is investing in education and training that will prepare our workers to take full advantage of these developing markets and services."

“... labor interests and advocates for sustainable development have joined forces to bring new growth and opportunity to places like Williamson.”

One of the areas of economic development in renewable energy that the JOBS project focuses on is bringing education and training opportunities to high schools, vocational training programs, and community colleges. The green economy is not only about developing new construction and energy conservation programs. It is also about working with existing skills and technologies and adapting them to models that are more sustainable

economically as well as environmentally.

A strong partner in developing a workforce that can implement green technologies is the Federal Government. According to a 2009 report from the Federal Middle Class Task Force Council on Environmental Equality, there are currently not enough skilled workers and green entrepreneurs to expand weatherization and efficiency retrofit programs on a national scale.

Federally supported career-track programs for people of all skill levels can promote and expand green jobs opportunities. This is good news for those whose positions and skills have been eliminated or become obsolete over the past years of economic upheaval. The displaced workers that we serve are at the head of the line to meet new opportunities renewal and sustainable energy projects are bringing to West Virginians.

There is a long history of hard work and pride in the accomplishments of West Virginians sustaining a coal

mining industry that provides power to the majority of American homes and businesses. Change can be scary, and at the same time exciting for those communities that have seen opportunity dwindle as technologies and markets change.

For more information about the JOBS Project and what it is doing to promote well-being for West Virginians, please go to the website www.jobs-project.org.

MCACEC guest speaker highlights

by Donna Metz, Principal, Marion County Adult and Community Education Center

Since January, the MCACEC (Marion County Adult and Community Education Center) students have engaged in several workshops and presentations given by various members of our community.

From listening to college recruiters to receiving “Jerk Training” students have had the opportunity to expand their perspectives thanks to these generous presenters.

Terry Riley of the West Virginia Junior College (WVJC) spoke with our students on “successful thinking” as he highlighted the advantages of earning degrees from WVJC.

“ . . . students have had the opportunity to expand their perspectives thanks to these generous presenters.”



Danielle Conaway of Hope, INC.

On a much different note, students participated in a domestic violence prevention workshop presented by Danielle Conaway of Hope, INC.

Ms. Conaway not only educated students on domestic violence, but she also made those participating in the presentation aware of the services provided by Hope, INC. for victims of domestic abuse.

Paul Jarrett, a Harrison County SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment and Success) instructor, also visited MCACEC and engaged students in his “Jerk Training” workshop which focused on building healthy relationships.

Other speakers included Lisa Jones of the Marion County Solid Waste Authority and Suzanne Knicely of the OIC Training Academy.



Paul Jarrett delivering “Jerk Training.”

SPOKES and ABE working together

by Patricia Butler, SPOKES Instructor; Tara Brookover, ABE Instructor; Denise Aiken, CDC - Wetzel-Tyler Counties

The SPOKES/ABE Learning Center in New Martinsville has afforded students a number of benefits since integrating the two programs in April 2010.

Students have much more space in which to work and participate in activities than at the previous location. There are now three instructors and students have access to more computers.

The larger building has also enabled DHHR (Department of Health and Human Resources) to increase the number of students enrolling in both programs.

All of these factors have helped the three instructors for SPOKES

(Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment and Success), adult basic education (ABE), and career development to collaborate on projects that are larger in scope.

One of the collaborative projects utilized the Communicating With the Public module. The students worked in groups to write commercials to sell a product they developed.

Brainstorming and teamwork were evident as the groups finalized their written plans.

The jitters started once the oral presentation portion began as public speaking can be intimidating for many individuals. The students were

videotaped to use as a learning tool. They were then able to analyze their strengths as well as some skills they may need to improve in public speaking.

The use of technology made the project fun and educational. It focused on teamwork; then on individual presentations which helped to develop interview skills.

Another activity that is based on class and instructor collaboration is our panel interviews. Students and instructors are selected to act as a panel to help prepare other students for this type of interview. Students are

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SPOKES and ABE working together . . .

Continued from page 15

given the opportunity to serve as the interviewer as well as the interviewee. Both have helped build confidence and skills.

We have also invited local employers to visit our classroom to talk with our students about the expectations they have for their employees. So far, we have had employers from Bob Evans, Northwood Health Systems, PIA, and Wesbanco. Another guest, Sandy Brookover, spoke with the students about her locally-owned small business where they deliver groceries to barges on the Ohio River.

These employers discussed attendance requirements, dress code, upholding the integrity of the company, and opportunities available to employees. This gave our students a better understanding of what is expected of them while on the job. It also provided the students with resources in order to make informed

decisions when choosing a career. Another small business owner, local artist Dana Hall, recently opened the Florentine Arts Center and visited the classroom to talk with the students about turning their talents into business opportunities.

Mr. Hall has an engineering degree. However, he has used his artistic talents to open a business that displays all types of creativity. His business includes small shops where local artists can display and sell their work. The center includes crafts, paintings, photography, jewelry, tattoos, and much more.

They even have an open mic night for local musicians to have the opportunity to express themselves through music.

After Mr. Hall visited the classroom as a speaker, he then invited our class to take a tour of the Florentine Arts Center. The students really enjoyed

observing the local art and discovering the unique opportunities that our community has to offer.

Overall, the SPOKES/ABE Learning Center has been greatly beneficial to everyone connected with the program.

Our newly printed brochure helps DHHR promote the programs to its clients to help them become more employable.

Throughout the 10-week program, students are given the opportunity to learn the skills that will serve them well in their job searches and along the way, they will also come into contact with local employers.

In turn, employers visiting the Center get a first-hand view of what is being accomplished and how SPOKES/ABE students may fit into their businesses as employees.

Summers County humane society thanks student volunteers

by Missy Jacobs, Summers County SPOKES Instructor

Animal Control and Welfare Project (ACWP) would like to say a special “thank you” to Jessica Martin and Jennifer Bates in assisting with Railroad Days.

“The ACWP booth and Prettiest Pet Contest would not have been such a great fundraising success had it not been for Jennifer and Jessica giving their time and effort for the animals,” says Missy Jacobs, ACWP president and SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment and Success) instructor.

Jessica and Jennifer coordinated the “Prettiest Pet Contest” and helped with all aspects of organizing the event for the ACWP booth.

Jennifer plans to continue her commitment to the community by continuing to volunteer for the animals and children in our community.

Jessica plans to attend Concord University in the spring, where she will work towards earning her Education degree and teach Kindergarten one day soon.



Jessica Martin, Missy Jacobs, Jennifer Bates

The animals give a huge shout out to Jennifer and Jessica and bark and purr, “thank you!”

How will the SPOKES program help you in the future?

by Bobbie Sue George, SPOKES Student, Wetzel-Tyler Counties

The *SPOKES program provides education pertaining to job readiness and customer service. My instructors have provided me with useful education in numerous skills and subjects. This program has also taught me the steps in achieving employment with a personal Career Development Consultant. I know SPOKES will have a big impact on my future.

While I've been attending SPOKES, my instructors have taught me how to prepare myself for a career. I have improved many skills since I began. Some of these skills are listening, observation, and teamwork. I now feel confident that I will work well with employers and co-workers. I also

each and every day is a step closer to success. My self esteem levels have risen tremendously. I feel confident that this program is sending me down the right path for future achievements. I believe I have always been a good citizen, but SPOKES has encouraged me to become a better one. I plan to get involved in the near future and join an organization to help the community. I've always known I loved helping other people, but now it is my mission in life.

Through many lessons and conversations, I have learned that your attitude reflects on how your day will go.

There are so many things I have learned in this short period of time. One of my favorite lessons was goal setting.

I think it is fun to be challenged, to conquer goals, and earn achievements. Dealing with change was also a great lesson. I believe many people that enroll in the program start off afraid of change. They are afraid of accomplishments and success because they have put in their mind they are failures. I can personally say that I, too, feared change. Now I embrace it and for that, I thank SPOKES.

“My visualization of SPOKES is that it is not just completely about finding a job. It is also about finding yourself . . . I have been blessed to be a part of it.”

believe that I will do an excellent job helping customers. I enjoyed the Customer Service program very much. It not only teaches you how to represent your company, it teaches you how to respect others. I plan to use the lessons that I got from Customer Service every day, even in a work environment. The program has also taught me a great deal about different computer programs. I have enjoyed and appreciated this knowledge. The SPOKES program has also helped me brush up on my reading and math skills. These subjects, team projects and overall class experience are also helping me prepare for college and my journey in life.

In my personal experience, the program has opened my eyes to a world of great opportunity. I feel as though

If you live life with a positive attitude, you will have positive feedback. If you are negative, the only thing to look forward to is more negativity. This reminds me of the saying, “You get what you give.”

The SPOKES program is more to me than just a class to help find employment; to me it is a class that helps reach personal achievement and self-importance. If you have ever heard the expression, “food for thought,” then you would understand when I say that the SPOKES building is like a grocery store.

It provides a wide range of nourishment and knowledge, when you leave you feel well balanced and whole.

My visualization of SPOKES is that it is not just completely about finding a job. It is also about finding yourself. SPOKES helps you place yourself into society. It shows where you stand and how far you will go. It measures your motivation and self-will. I have been blessed to be a part of it.

By being in the SPOKES program I can already vision a bright future. This program has helped mold me into a confident and determined person. I know that I will reach my goal to success, by using what I learned in the SPOKES program.

Letters from K-12 students

by Shalom Tazewell, Raleigh County ESL Instructor

Periodically, the EL Civics (English Literacy) program in Beckley visits an elementary school in Raleigh County to talk to the children about the EL Civics students' native countries. Each classroom is assigned a country designation, and the PreK-12 students rotate between the classrooms. The EL Civics students come prepared with posters, toys, traditional costumes, and artwork for "show and tell." It is a wonderful opportunity for the EL Civics students to practice and use their English in a non-threatening environment and for the elementary school children to learn firsthand about other countries and hopefully, to understand and enjoy the diversity represented in the United States.

At the most recent "International Fair," the children wrote thank you letters to the EL Civics students. Excerpts from some of these letters follow:

Dear Mrs. Tazewell,

"I want to thank you and all of your students for coming here and telling us all those wonderful things about all of those countries. I would also like to thank you for making it easier for us to understand them. My favorite country was China. I liked all the beautiful items that they brought us. I learned that in China you can only have one child."

Dear Mrs. Tazewell,

"I loved International Day. My favorite class was Colombia. I loved learning about the animals, like donkeys and horses. Also, I liked learning about the work they do, like taking apples and turning them into beans. Lastly, I liked learning about their school. It's very sad that there is only teacher teaching every subject and more students than we have."

Dear Mrs. Tazewell,

"Thank you for coming to International Day. My favorite class was Thailand. I like hearing about what your (sic) not supposed to do and what you can do. Your (sic) doing a great job with teaching them English. I was so happy for getting to learn about each and every country."

Dear Mrs. Tazewell,

"Thank you for bringing people from different countries. You did good teaching them English. I loved all of them, but my favorite was India and Iran. The Iran vase was awesome, but the India blanket was pretty."

Dear Mrs. Tazewell,

"I really enjoyed China, Mexico, and Iran. You could come back and bring back your students and have another presentation. It was really fun. First, I like China. China is an awesome country. It has some weird (sic) rules too. It also had an earthquack (sic). Next, I like Mexico. Mexico is also an awesome country. Last, I like Iran. Iran's country is shaped like a cat. Iran's flag is so cool it has an ornament in the middle, but it always changes."

Dear Mrs. Tazewell,

"Thank you for letting the ESL students come to our school. I enjoyed it. How hard did you work with them? My favorite was Iran, China, and Burma. I loved them all, but they are my favorite. You did very good with them. I was surprised when I heard them and thanks."

GED® graduate earns culinary awards

by Donna Metz, Principal, Marion County Adult and Community Education Center

Ryan Contraski attended the Marion County Adult and Community Education Center (MCACEC) test preparation classes with teacher Kay Pitrolo in the year 2010 and received his GED® Diploma that year. Ryan was very focused on his goals and his studies. He believes that education is the way to a better future.

So, after graduating from MCACEC, Ryan was nominated for, and received the Frances Pierpont Scholarship and the WV State GED® Scholarship to attend Pierpont Community and Technical College's School of Culinary Arts.



Ryan (second from left) was on the President's List of students for academic achievement for the fall 2010 semester. He is a member of the Culinary Team that won the West Virginia State Culinary Competition and then went to the American Culinary Federation Northeast Regional Competition in Columbus, Ohio where they all won silver medals and took 3rd place. Ryan now has 2 silver medals for his Culinary Awards.

We here at MCACEC would like to congratulate Ryan on all of his successes. We are very proud to call him "our" student, and we can't wait to see what else he will achieve!

“I kept my promise to mom”

by Tina Graham, Student, Brooke County ABE Program

My name is Tina. My story starts when I was nine years old, and my mom became very ill and was not expected to live more than five years. Since I was the only girl of six children, it seemed that a lot of responsibility fell on my shoulders. My dad was a truck driver and not around much, so I spent most of my time making sure everyone and everything in the house was taken care of.

My childhood was not a time for playing and having fun. I went to school so tired, sometimes, that I would get in trouble for going to sleep in class. With chores to do before school and chores to do after school, I had very little time for homework. When the lights finally went out and I should have been sleeping, I would often have a flashlight under the covers trying to do my homework without disturbing my brothers that shared my room.

School was a struggle for me, but being strong-willed just like my mom, I managed to get passing grades. By the time I made it to high school, I found concentrating and keeping focused was very difficult because I was always thinking about my mom. Even though she had a wonderful doctor whose treatment added many years to her life, I was always worried if this would be the last day. I was really concerned that she would need me and I wouldn't be there for her.

“Angel, I am not coming home this time . . . Promise me you will go back to school. So I promised her I would.”

My mom used to tell me, “Honey, I know you have a lot of responsibilities, and I'm sorry you had to grow up so fast and were not able to be a kid. But remember, the good Lord will not give you more than you can handle. You're a strong young lady.” Sometimes I

doubted that because at age 15 I was missing so much school, I finally just dropped out.

At this young age, I devoted my life to caring for my mom and my family. Mom felt so guilty that I quit school to take care of her and my brothers. She made me promise her that I would go back to school and graduate. When I was 17 I got a job to help out with



finances and by 18 I was dating my future and now ex-husband. At age 22 I had a major decision to make - should I marry this man or continue to care for my mom. I decided to do both. I was at her house everyday and later toward the end I moved back home with her.

Mom's condition was already bad enough, but then she got breast cancer. By this time, I was a mother trying to raise four children and care for mom. Finally the news I had always dreaded came true. During mom's last hospital stay, the doctor told me

there was nothing further he could do. Going back in her room, I tried to put on a brave face, but like any mom would, she saw right through me. I crawled into bed with her and she said, “Honey, you grew up too fast because of me. I want you to promise me you

will get an education. Angel, I am not coming home this time, but you are a very strong person and you can do anything you put your mind to. Promise me you will go back to school.” So I promised her I would. A little later she said, “Tina Marie, I meant what I said. You're not a quitter.” Later mom slipped into a coma and passed away a few days later.

As a single mom, working two dead end jobs at a time, I often felt like quitting, but then I would hear mom's words pushing me on. At age 35 I enrolled in GED classes but I had no self-confidence and felt stupid. School was not my priority at this time. However, in May of 2009, I got hurt on the job and could not work. I told myself, it is now or never.

I finally made it because of three things in my life. First, was that promise I made my mom and the fact that I could hear her voice saying I wasn't a quitter. Second, was my wonderful teacher, Mrs. Crago. She constantly encouraged me and gave me self-esteem. That was something I never had. Mrs. Crago had confidence in me when I had none in myself. Third, I wanted to prove to myself that I could do something that would make me proud of myself.

I did it! I have my diploma. It can open so many doors for me. I would like to get funding and continue my education in the medical field. I want so much more for my children and me. I don't want them to settle for anything less than they deserve. I want them to go to college. Finally, I feel good about myself. Now that I have my GED, I will have the better future I deserved. I'm stronger and more determined than ever!

Three reasons I would recommend SPOKES to others

by Alexander W. Alltop, Wood County SPOKES Student

(Instructor's note: Alex has obtained OSHA certifications in Bloodborne Pathogens, OSHA Kitchen Safety and Restaurant Sanitation, and American Heart Association CPR/First Aid certification. He earned the SPOKES Ready-to-Work Certificate, the Customer Service certification through Rockhurst University, and a Silver Level Career-Readiness Certificate by the Governor. Because of his efficiency, strong work ethic, and ever-present positive attitude, he was chosen to perform community service responsibilities as our Wood County SPOKES volunteer. He has become an integral and invaluable part of our team! Alex said that he plans to enroll in WVU-P this fall in order to become an elementary teacher – mostly based upon his experience with the SPOKES program.)

In this essay I will write why I would recommend *SPOKES to others and why. There is many reasons why but I will talk about three of those reasons.

The first reason why would be that it is an excellent learning tool. They teach you many things in this program. We have learned how to work with computers, and their different applications. We also have been shown how to write resumes the proper way. Which I might add I did not know the proper way before this class. Also we work with Key Train. It helps us with our reading and math skills for when we have to take the Work Keys test.

The second reason would be the laid back atmosphere in this program. You are treated like an adult rather than a child even though you are in a classroom setting. Everyone seems to be relaxed which I believe makes you learn much easier and quicker.

Lastly I would recommend this program to someone because of the teachers. They are very professional while being patient with us. Some of us students have not been in school for a long time. They take the time to teach us however long it takes when we do not understand something. They are also very understanding to the students because they have overcome major obstacles in their lives and they can relate to our problems. I think this is important because it gives us better respect of them.

In conclusion I would like to say that this is a worthwhile program. It will give us the tools to succeed in our future endeavors and possibly give us the opportunity to help someone else that is facing the same obstacles that we have faced.

“It will give us the tools to succeed in our future endeavors and possibly give us the opportunity to help someone else that is facing the same obstacles that we have faced.”

The value of SPOKES

by Phylecia Strong, Wood County SPOKES Student

(Instructor's note: Since writing this article, Phylecia has taken the WorkKeys® test and earned a Gold Level Career-Readiness Certificate by the Governor. She has earned an American Heart Association CPR/First Aid certification, and she started as a full-time student at WVU-P on January 10 with the goal of transferring to Washington State Community College to obtain an associate degree in Applied Science in Physical Therapy Assistant.)

My *SPOKES class is very enjoyable most of the time. I have learned a lot already from attending. One thing that I like about the class is the learning activities. We use key train to brush up on academic skills. I enjoy doing the math on Key Train because it refreshes my memory on most of the math I learned in school.

Another thing I like about SPOKES is the group Modules we do. The group Modules is fun because we get everybody's opinion on whatever the topic is. I usually learn something new from each one that we do. I can also help other people understand the Modules if they don't.

The thing I like most about my SPOKES class is the people and the teachers. The teachers make the class fun and exciting most of the time. The other students in the class are nice to be around too. It is nice to know that there are other people trying to better their life for themselves and their children like I am.

So all in all, SPOKES class is very productive for me. It is also a good environment for me to learn new things and brush up on old skills. The people in the class and the teachers are a plus too. So when SPOKES class is over I will probably miss it and the people.