

Braxton County ABE instructor receives Hometown Hero award

By Trish Given, Braxton County Board of Education

Amy Curtis, the Braxton County adult basic education (ABE) instructor, was presented with the WSAZ-TV (the local NBC affiliate) Hometown Hero Award this summer. Every week, WSAZ recognizes people who have made a significant difference in other people's lives and/or communities.

Her husband, Dr. Mark Curtis, her regional coordinator, Shawn Cook, and state staff representative, David Hollingsworth, were there to share this special moment with her. Shawn and David wanted to keep this award a surprise for her, so they arranged a "meeting" for her to attend telling her she didn't need to bring anything, but to be sure to be there. Amy was nervous about this "meeting," and she just knew she was going to be fired. Little did she know that they and Braxton County Schools were planning to honor her for her enthusiasm, skills, and love for people.

Amy is a truly remarkable person, and so deserving of this recognition. When she first began as the ABE instructor in Braxton County, Amy was so frustrated with the lack of good computers in her classroom that she sent an email to her husband and parents and attached a picture of her outdated computer lab. Her husband is a veterinarian in St. Albans, and he petitioned some of his and her former Marine buddies (she was a Marine, also) for donations to replace the old computers in the classroom. Her mother and step-father forwarded the email to their friends as well. They raised hundreds of dollars and were able to buy eight new computers.

Amy has taken her students on the most amazing field trips. She has taken them to different colleges and to her husband's animal

hospital where they were able to watch a surgery. On College Day at the Civic Center, Amy arranged for her students to meet Phil Pfister, formerly the World's Strongest Man, who talked to them about goals and dreams. Andy Palmer of *West Virginia's Most Wanted* is a friend of Phil Pfister, and he also talked to them. They went to the Moore Hereford Farm where some of the students gave shots to cattle, and the braver ones put on the long gloves and did pregnancy tests on the cattle.

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Amy Curtis, Hometown Hero award winner, shares her plaque with husband, Mark Curtis.

(Photograph taken by David Hollingsworth)

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I don't know about you, but I missed our summer and fall issues of *Networks*. I especially felt this as I prepared to edit and layout this current issue. I am proud to work with such a great group of people who care and love others so much that they are willing to do whatever it takes to enrich lives.

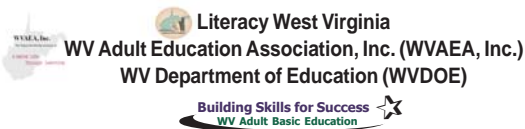
This issue is so large that it has been divided into sections for easier reading. The awards section, pages 1 - 13, includes teachers, tutors, programs, and students who were honored for their accomplishments both statewide and nationally.

The recognition section, beginning on page 16, includes highlights of ceremonies held during the summer and fall. Pages 17 - 19 pay tribute to two special members of our "family." Pages 13 - 16 include student success stories; and student writings begin on page 22.

Thank you for sharing your stories with us. Now, you'd better set aside some time and relax while you drink a cup of hot chocolate and read about what a difference adult basic education and literacy makes in our lives both professionally and personally. ■

Kathy

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2007 GED Distinguished Achievement Award

By Debra Kimbler, WV GED Administrator

Deborah L. Copeland, business woman and author, was awarded the 2007 West Virginia GED Distinguished Achievement Award. The award is given annually 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. Copeland was recognized at the 21st Century Skills for Life Conference, sponsored by the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc., on October 23-26, 2007, at Oglebay Park in Wheeling, WV. She was honored for developing Working Smart Business Consultants, a training and development firm designed for the company seeking a more professional climate. Ms. Copeland believes that her success has been proven nationally, as well as locally. During her time in business, she has provided workshops/seminars/in-house training to individuals and businesses across the nation.

She is well known in the community and possesses a deep commitment to give back to the community and state.

This philosophy was best exemplified with the selection of Copeland as the 1992 Entrepreneur of the Year for the State of West Virginia, Service Division. The Institute of American Entrepreneurs judged Deborah Copeland and her business on community involvement, business plan and objectives, financial information, quality programs, and overall commitment to success in her field.

In addition to the many organizational involvements through board membership, contributions and/or membership, she was selected by the *State Journal* as one of the 10 business people profiled in *Who Who's in West Virginia Business*, *State Journal's* Executive of the Year,

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Hometown Hero award . . .

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The class also visited the Fred B. Eberlee Vocational Center in Buckhannon because some of her students were interested in welding and nursing.

Amy has helped students with car washes and raffles so they could raise money to have a graduation. The graduation was scheduled to be at Holly Gray Park in Sutton, and they had enough money left over that Amy was able to hire a sky diver to land during their graduation. Because of the weather, the sky diver was not able to attend, but he arranged for the students to go to the airport and ride in an airplane. The skydivers also prepared a meal for them.

The fund raising events provided enough money that Amy rented a room at the Days Inn at Flatwoods for them to have a dance after

graduation. She worked hours on a Power Point of pictures of them to play during their graduation.

Amy is such an inspiration to people who really need a boost, and she is a teacher who genuinely cares in a classroom that needs that kind of person. It is so refreshing to find a teacher who will go to whatever lengths possible to see her students achieve success. ■

“Amy is a truly remarkable person, and so deserving of this recognition. . . It is so refreshing to find a teacher who will go to whatever lengths possible to see her students achieve success.”

Mercer County Academy of Adult Learning wins outstanding partner award at WorkForce WV conference

By Marcia Ware, Academy of Adult Learning Coordinator

At the 2007 WorkForce WV conference in Chester, WV the Mercer County Academy of Adult Learning was presented with the *Outstanding Service Provider* award for the entire state of West Virginia. This award is presented each year to the agency that provides outstanding collaboration with all agencies within a WorkForce WV Center.

Mercer County Academy of Adult Learning, located within the Mercer County WorkForce WV Center in Princeton, is composed of two major components: the adult basic education (ABE) program and the SPOKES (Strategic Planning and Occupational Knowledge for Employment Success) program.

ABE provides free services for adults ages 16 and above who are no longer enrolled in school. Clients from the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) are referred to SPOKES, a job-preparation program designed to assist with the transition into employment and/or job training.

Within the Academy, a job coach is on staff to assist students in determining suitable jobs to match

their interests and abilities. The job coach also meets with businesses to find job referrals, job leads, and information on employer expectations.

The State Department of Education's Office of Workforce Development and Adult Education issues a Ready-to-Work certificate to students who meet the requirements for attendance, achieve satisfactory employability skills post-testing scores, learn computer literacy skills, and complete the required WorkKeys attainment.

GED (General Educational Development) scholarships are available for the payment of the GED test, and a recognition ceremony is held annually.

A very caring staff is probably one of the most important factors for the success of the ABE and SPOKES program. Each staff member, along with an AmeriCorps member and volunteer, is truly dedicated in helping the adults in Mercer County find employment by assisting in the removal of barriers, increasing basic skills for success, changing life styles, and locating resources for

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Distinguished Achievement award . . .

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The Institute of American Entrepreneurs, Finalist of Ernst and Young's Entrepreneur of the Year, and Distinguished Judge's Award Entrepreneur. *Attitude Therapy*, a book written by Deborah Copeland, is also among her many accomplishments.

Outstanding Partner award . . .

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those in need. It is that one-on-one contact with a caring staff member that increases self-confidence and pride if the adult is willing to seek assistance.

The Academy has been able to serve thousands of adults in Mercer and surrounding counties by assisting them in completing their education, finding employment, entering job training/college, and/or becoming more productive citizens.

But the Academy does not reach these goals without the assistance of the partners in the WorkForce WV building.

The Job Service Agency helps ABE students discover what employment opportunities are available, complete applications, register for WIA assistance, etc. The Unemployment Insurance Agency refers adults to the Academy who need to complete their education or need to brush-up on other skills in order to find employment. Through the Saunders Staffing Services, adults enrolled in the Academy can find temporary employment while studying for their GED or brushing-up on their academic skills. Adult students are referred to the Division of Rehabilitation when there is a suspected learning disability or a physical disability that needs to be addressed in order to find employment and/or to complete their education. The Educational Opportunity Center assists adult education students in identifying appropriate career choices and securing financial aid for those who want to enter college or job training. The Mountain Heart Child Care Services is a valuable resource for ABE students who attend the Academy because many are single parents or parents of young children. Without good child-care, adult students cannot concentrate or focus on their plan of study. Youth Connections assists the out-of-school youth by providing counseling, financial assistance and support for those youth who need to complete their education. The office of Food

Having enjoyed a wonderful and productive business career, Deborah has sold several businesses and settled down to a 40-hour work week (Retired!) She consults and enjoys days with her six children, three of whom have joined her family through adoption within the last eight years. Copeland now conducts a weekly prayer group for women in her home on Wednesday mornings. ■

“The Academy has been able to serve thousands of adults . . . by assisting them in . . . becoming more productive citizens. But the Academy does not reach these goals without the assistance of the partners in the WorkForce WV building.”

Stamp Employment and Training refers clients to the learning center in order to qualify them for food stamps.

The vocational director of the Mercer County Technical Education Center meets with students one-on-one to assist in career development while attending the Academy. This provides an avenue for the next step in their career development.

One particular client illustrates the partnership within the building. She was orphaned and homeless at a young age. She began her journey by enrolling with the Food Stamp Employment and Training department. She was referred to the Academy of Adult Learning where she went on to earn her GED; received financial assistance through Youth Connections; and has entered job training as a result of these services.

The Mercer County Academy of Adult Learning is fortunate to be located within the WorkForce Center. This young lady would have lacked the transportation to meet with the various agencies if they had not been located in one facility. “This is what the WorkForce WV Center is all about . . . helping each and every adult to learn basic skills to cope in life and become a better person for having the services available in a one-stop fashion.” ■

Missouri governor presents award to WV collaborative partners

(Reprinted in part with permission from the Charleston Daily Mail)

Officials from West Virginia State Community and Technical College (WVSCTC) and Charleston Area Medical Center (CAMC) traveled to St. Louis to receive the Innovator Award from the Southern Growth Policies Board (SGPB) for the WVSCTC Nursing Pathways Program.

The award was presented by Missouri Governor Matt Blunt at the annual conference of the SGPB in St. Louis on June 3.

Dr. Ron Bartley, WVSCTC interim president, said he is pleased that the WVSCTC has been chosen for this award. Bartley said, "It is an honor to be recognized for our innovative approach to workforce development by an organization that serves 13 states."

This unique program was developed in partnership with CAMC, the adult basic education (ABE) program at Regional Education Service Agency III (RESA III), and the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) to recruit and expand the outreach for nurses to non-traditional workers. These workers may not have considered nursing due to academic or economic barriers, may have been out of the workforce for some time, may not have recently been in the secondary educational system, or may be hospital incumbent workers.

Funding for the WVSCTC Nursing Pathways Program is provided by the U.S. Department of Labor's Community-Based Job Training Grants program. CAMC provides funding for faculty

salaries and benefits as well as funding for student expenses such as tuition, fees, and books.

The partnership between WVSCTC and CAMC began as an effort to train registered nurses to address a critical shortage in West Virginia. Officials at six Charleston-area hospitals projected a need for 750 new registered nurses over a three-year period, with CAMC representing 80 percent of that need.

"We have found that many folks are intimidated by the thought of taking classes or they need to brush up on their academics because they have been out of school for a while," said Janna Inghram, director of CAMC physician recruitment and workforce development. "This particular model provides adult learners the opportunity to revisit their study and test-taking skills, as well as take developmental course work that prepares them for pursuing a degree and career in nursing."

Adult basic education (ABE) and RESA III developed and implemented a "Middle-College" to increase student success in the Nursing Pathways Program. RESA III identified 41 candidates with developmental needs and 87 percent of Middle College participants passed the Nursing Entrance Test. The first class will be graduating in December.

This aspect of the Nursing Pathways Program is unique and is expected to stand as the model for other programs in West Virginia as well as across the nation. ■

GED graduate - now WVU student - receives national award

By Debra Kimbler, WV GED Administrator

The West Virginia Department of Education General Educational Development (GED) Program recognized Whitney Metz for receiving the 2006 National Award for Outstanding Achievement by attaining a Total Standard Score of 3680 on the GED Tests. This is the 20th year of the GED National Awards for Outstanding Achievement Program, and her scores have placed her in the top one



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GED graduate - now WVU student - wins award . . .

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percent of the National Class Rank (US) of Graduating High School Seniors.

Ms. Metz was recognized at the 21st Century Skills for Life Conference, sponsored by the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc., on October 23-26, 2007, at Oglebay Park in Wheeling, WV. Her commitment to education was evident as she could not attend the conference because she did not want to miss classes at West Virginia University (WVU).

This 20-year-old WVU student attends the university on scholarships and grants, including

the Promise Scholarship. She was home-schooled by her parents for most of her school years. She attended North Marion High School grades 9-11, but chose to return to home-schooling her senior year.

In 2006, over 700,000 individuals completed the tests in the United States, Canada, and US territories. This year, just 75 people will be honored for their outstanding achievements. Whitney's high scores on the GED Tests made her one of these 75, and she represents a true "success story." ■

West Virginia GED testing centers shine

By Debra Kimbler, WV GED Administrator

At the 2007 annual professional development conference in October at Oglebay, several GED testing centers were honored during the awards brunch. These honors were given to counties and institutional education centers surpassing all others in the number of GED candidates tested and the percentage of candidates that passed the GED.

These results were taken from the 2005 GED Statistical Report, which is the most recent report coming from the American Council on Education, GED Testing Service.

Capturing the honors for the 2005 Highest Test Volume was the Regional Education Service Agency III (RESA III). Chief examiner Barry Kelly and examiner Benda Helmick accepted the award, also serving RESA III as an examiner is Joyce Wilson. A total of 463 GED candidates were tested.



Benda Helmick, Debra Kimbler, and Barry Kelly at the awards brunch.

(Photograph taken by David Hollingsworth)



Rowena Harmon and Debra Kimbler at awards brunch.

(Photograph taken by David Hollingsworth)

The institutional education center acquiring the 2005 Highest Test Volume was the West Virginia Department of Institutional Education Anthony Center with chief examiner Rowena Harman and examiner Paige Currey. A total of 127 GED candidates were tested at the Anthony Correctional Center.

The institutional center with the 2005 Highest Passing Rate was West Virginia Industrial Home for Youth with a 96 percent passing rate. Serving as examiners for the West Virginia Industrial Home for Youth are chief examiner Angela Curran and examiners Katherine Blankenship and John Chute

The Brooke County High School, chief examiner Joe Starcher, with examiner Cindy Thomaselli, received the honor of having the highest percentage of GED candidates passing – 96 percent. These two West Virginia testing sites far surpassed the 2005 national passing rate of 72.1 percent.

This data once again made West Virginia's GED and adult basic education (ABE) centers shine. ■

Raleigh County SPOKES student is named the adult student of the year

By Helena Ellis, Instructor, Raleigh County SPOKES



At the annual fall professional development conference, James Daye accepted the 2007 Adult Student of the Year award presented by the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.). His two youngest children accompanied him onto the stage at Oglebay Park as he accepted the award before the audience of 175 who had gathered for the awards brunch.

Through hard work and determination, James earned the Ready to Work Certificate in SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Employment Success), passed the GED, and graduated from Raleigh County Career Center in the Electrical Technology Program within a 15 month period of time. This is the same James who only months before lacked motivation and direction in his life. Now 32 years of age, he spent years moving from place to place and holding a multitude of jobs that were unfulfilling with no hope for financial security.

James was awarded custody of his two small children and, as a single father, almost instantly sensed the urgency of “getting his act together” so he could provide a stable home for them.

This was the changing point in his life. He completed the SPOKES program in January 2006, passed the GED test in April 2006, then enrolled at the Career Center, completing a two year electrical program in one year. He graduated in May 2007, earning the distinction of the student in his field with the highest GPA and was awarded membership into the National Technical Honor Society.

What makes this so amazing is that along this journey, his mode of transportation was a bicycle. He walked his toddler to daycare, got his daughter on the Head Start bus, jumped on his bike and started his day. He arrived at class with a red nose, cold hands, and icicles hanging from his bike. He never complained - he just made a pot of coffee and got to work. In SPOKES and the electrical program, he inspired other adult learners with his tenacity and assisted other students with math, computer skills, and electrical problems.

The story is far from over. He is now working as an electrician and passed the journeyman exam in August 2007. In the next four years, his goal is to work toward becoming a master electrician.

James has used every resource available to him as an adult learner to accomplish his educational goals. Equally important is the role model he has been to his children, who someday, will know and understand the commitment he made to himself—and to them. ■



**in his
own
words**

“I would like to start by saying that I am very honored to have been awarded the “Adult Student of the Year Award”. I had no idea that I could ever achieve such an outstanding accomplishment. I am proud of just getting my GED, and now this award makes everything seem very much worth it. After all the hard work and struggles that I went through to get my education, being named student of the year was really the last thing I was expecting.

There are quite a few people that helped me along my journey and I owe them a lot more than words could ever explain. First, my highest respect and thanks goes to my two beautiful children, Thomas and Angel. I thank you for inspiring me to go back to school and to give my all to be the best father I could possibly for the two of you. I love you, babies. Next, I would like to thank Helena Ellis for believing in me and supporting everything I was interested in doing with my life. She helped me realize that goals can be reached even when you're a single father. Thank you, Helena, for being a true teacher and friend to me. Speaking of teachers, I would really like to thank all the teachers out there that guide students in the right direction in their journey of life. Most importantly, I need to thank God for seeing my children and me through all the challenges and trials that we have overcome throughout the past few years. Thank you.

Putnam County couple wins top honor

By Pam Bryan, ABE Coordinator/Literacy West Virginia Regional Technical Assistant

Walker and Gail Thompson of Putnam County Literacy Volunteers of America were honored in October at the 2007 annual professional development conference held at Oglebay. They were presented with the Volunteer Literacy Provider Award, one of the two new awards given this year by the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.) It was a pleasure to hear that Cindy Winters, Adult Learning Center Coordinator, had nominated this deserving couple.

For over 20 years Gail has been involved with literacy in Putnam County as a tutor and a certified tutor trainer. Walker officially joined her with his involvement in 2000 after retiring from Union Carbide. In 2001 he became a member of the Board of Directors. He worked with the committee that facilitated the state merger of Literacy Volunteers of America and Laubach Literacy and serves on the Board of Directors of the merged organization now called Literacy West Virginia.

A student speaks

By Rebecca Nossaman, Putnam County adult education/literacy student

(Submitted by Cindy Winters, Putnam County Adult Learning Center Coordinator and reprinted with permission from *Tutor Times* a periodic publication of Literacy Volunteers of Putnam County.)

In the spring of 2005, I walked into the adult learning center at Putnam County Technology Center and was greeted by Cindy Winters and Debbie King. I was at my lowest personally due to the break-up of my fifteen year marriage and all the changes that go with that. I was very emotional and tears flowed off and on; I was scared to death. I just knew I needed to begin my new life with working towards an education to secure a brighter future. Debbie King helped with all the paperwork, and Cindy Winters did all she could to calm me and assure me things would be okay. She even checked in on me that summer to see how I was doing.

I was nervous when the fall classes began in August 2005, but again, all the teachers and staff in the adult education room are caring and helpful. I was quickly connected with a tutor, Walker Thompson. Walker helped me build my math skills

Walker and Gail provide continuous support and tutoring to the students at the Adult Learning Center in Putnam County. They come to the classroom once a week to provide tutoring in reading, math, English, or whatever is needed that day. They provide one-on-one tutoring that is critical for the students' success. As Cindy said, "They are energetic and excited for the students and interested in identifying and removing the students' barriers to success."

Thank you, Gail and Walker for your dedication to the students. You lead by example and those of us who know you feel blessed.

The following article was written by one of Walker and Gail's students. This was published in the *Tutor Times*, Putnam County's Literacy Volunteers newsletter. ■



Walker and Gail Thompson with Mark Hedrick, WVAEA, Inc. awards committee chair.

(Photograph taken by David Hollingsworth)

as did the classroom teacher, Kathryn Ellis. You must understand I could not even do long division, but Walker was positive and consistent and helped me connect the dots mentally and build my skills to work with the math problems, and Kathryn knew just how to explain things to make my brain click. Some days were very difficult, many tears and lots of frustration and wanting to give up, but Walker wouldn't let me! He taught me to expect more from myself and to believe in my ability to learn and grow in my education. Later in the year, I began working with Walker's wife, Gail, to brush up on some grammar and she was such a big help and often collaborated with Cindy Winters as to what I needed to be doing.

The teachers and tutors really take care of your every need, and not just school-wise. They

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student speaks . . .

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care when you are ill, they care if you are hungry, and often provide snacks because they know you concentrate better when you have a healthy snack in your system. They get involved in your life, they ask about your kids, what you like to do out of school, etc. They provide endless encouragement to the students making a go at their education. They do anything and everything they can to help you get your life in order. I cannot speak more highly of the program; I think it is the tops!

The school year went quickly and like a baby bird in a nest, I was “pushed out” and sent on my way. But like a momma bird, they let me know they were always close by.

I began that summer 2006 semester at West Virginia State University and continued on in the fall 2006/2007 term. I still visit the classroom occasionally at Putnam Career Center and have never lost contact with my tutors. Walker and Gail have worked with me continuously through email and phone calls (many time in the wee hours of the morning) to assist me with my college lessons.

My education and brighter future is underway all thanks to the volunteers and teachers that work so hard for us students. I have built up to doing some moderate algebra and, with the exception of math, I am a straight “A” student. I dream of the day I can invite my tutors to my graduation. I don’t know where I would be without the Literacy Volunteers and I cannot thank them enough, but I will sure try.

My advice to new tutors or anyone thinking about becoming involved with the Literacy Volunteers is: Get involved; NEVER underestimate the time you spend with a student! I certainly has changed my life for the better and I am forever grateful! ■

RESA III secretary receives the Outstanding Service Personnel Award

By Tyann Douglas, ABE Coordinator

Christina Harper, the West Virginia SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Employment Success) program secretary was honored by receiving the 2007 Outstanding Service Personnel award presented at the annual fall conference in Oglebay.

Christina, an employee of RESA III (Regional Education Service Agency III) in Dunbar, WV, works with Tyann Douglas, SPOKES curriculum coordinator at RESA III. She also completes statewide reports required by DHHR (Department of Health and Human Resources) for David Hollingsworth, ABE coordinator at the Department of Education’s Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development.

In addition to her regular administrative duties, she has helped to develop many new organizational tools for the SPOKES program and has become an invaluable asset to the SPOKES instructors. Because David and Tyann are often required to spend time away from their offices, Christina serves as a liaison and resource person for instructors when a question or problem arises. She has to deal with crises, questions, changes, and many personalities on a daily basis. She knows how to deal with each situation as it arises, and she continues to solve any problems that need immediate attention.



L-R: Tyann Douglas with Christina Harper, award winner.

In addition to her job responsibilities, Christina also utilizes her administrative skills as registration committee chair for the annual fall adult basic education (ABE) professional development conference sponsored by the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.). She has planned and organized registration for this conference for the past six years. She is also responsible for financial duties i.e. purchase orders, invoices, and communication regarding these matters among all agencies and individuals who attend this conference each year.

Because of her administrative expertise and dedication to the association, she was appointed by

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outstanding service personnel award . . .

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the board of directors of WVAEA, Inc. to serve the vacated seat of vice-president until January, 2009.

Christina's secretarial skills are second-to-none, and she has a willingness to help above and beyond the call of duty. Her support for Tyann and David cannot be measured. Her extensive computer skills are put to the test by many of the reports and responsibilities required of her. Her patience is unmatched, and her wit and attitude often get her, and those around her, through the bad (and the good) days.

Due to unfortunate circumstances, Christina was unable to attend the conference this year. But she learned of her achievement via cell phone while Mark Hedrick, WVAEA, Inc. awards committee chair, announced it to the crowd of 175 people who had gathered for the awards brunch. She received a standing ovation for this honor.

Christina is a wonderful, caring, loving person and we are glad to know her, to work with her, and to call her our friend. ■

Mercer County DHHR family support supervisor is honored for her commitment to ABE

By Marcia Ware, Academy of Adult Learning Coordinator

Judy Bell, Mercer County family support supervisor for DHHR (Department of Health and Human Resources) has been named as the 2007 Adult Education Collaborative Partner by the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.). This award was presented to her during the awards brunch at the annual fall professional development conference held in Wheeling at Oglebay.

Judy has always been a strong supporter of adult education in Mercer County, and she has been a member of the advisory board for at least 14 years. She believes in the fact that adult education and training will assist adults in becoming self-sufficient. Judy has always worked closely with the staff of the Mercer County Academy of Adult Learning with both the adult basic education (ABE) and the SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Employment Success) programs.

A high number of student referrals come from DHHR with a total of 164 enrolling in the SPOKES program for 2006-07. In addition, students who are mandated to attend are enrolled in the ABE classes as well. During last program year, 66 adults from the SPOKES program found employment; 25 went on to job training; and 21 completed a work-based project.



Judy Bell (center) with staff of Mercer County Academy of Adult Learning.

(Photograph taken by David Hollingsworth)

Judy and her staff are in constant touch with the staff of the Academy of Adult Learning by phone and in person. She is more than willing to go the extra mile to make the program successful. She has been instrumental in bridging the gap between education and DHHR by supporting the positive role ABE plays in the lives of the DHHR client.

The center relies heavily on Judy's expertise. She knows the federal regulations and works with the center's staff to see that these regulations are met. She is the local spokesperson for DHHR at the state level. She is always available for consultation, advice, and ideas to improve the lives of those who need a GED, to find employment, or to overcome barriers.

Judy has worked very hard throughout the years to assist families through DHHR and adult education. The staff at the learning center has said that she can never retire because they rely on her so much for the success of their ABE/SPOKES programs. ■

RESA V award winners

By Dianna Flanagan, RESA V Regional Coordinator of Adult Education



L-R: Kim McConnaughy, WVAEA, Inc. president, Katrina Reed, Judy Armstrong, and Melissa Everly.

(Photograph taken by David Hollingsworth)

The Lakeview Adult Learning Center was named *Adult Program of the Year* and Misty Dawson was named the *Adult Educator of the Year* by the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.) at the annual fall conference at Olgebay Park in Wheeling. The association honors the program, student, educator, administrator, and partner agency of the year at their annual conference. RESA V is proud to announce these award winners.

The Lakeview Adult Learning Center received the *WV Program of the Year* award at the conference. The Wood County adult basic education (ABE) program has been in many locations in its 41 year history; it moved to its current location at the Lakeview Plaza in 2000 to become part of the Workforce WV One Stop.

Over the 41 years many excellent instructors have come and gone, but one thing has remained the same, the quality of the program. The ABE program expanded in 2002 by opening the Lincoln Adult Center. Both centers serve everyone from 16 to 90: the employed, under-employed, unemployed, retired, disabled, English as a Second Language (ESL), and homeless. The Lakeview Adult Learning Center is open 36+ hours a week including Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The Lincoln Adult Center is open 30 hours a week and is staffed by Linda McClead and Andrea Deem. Congratulations to Ray Pyles, Judy Armstrong, Melissa Everly, Katrina Reed, Jeannie Hayhurst, and Maria Lima for receiving this award.

Misty Dawson is the Ritchie/Pleasants/Tyler County ABE director and the Ritchie County ABE instructor. Misty has been involved with adult basic education for over 15 years; she has served as a state trainer, presenter, and mentor.

She was nominated by Laura Hughes, one of her students, for the *WV Adult Educator of the Year* award. Laura wrote, "Our teacher doesn't make us feel that we are inadequate even if we can't understand the simplest math problem. We have a warm atmosphere in our classroom...she makes us feel that we can do anything...I used to think that where I was in life was all there was to it, but now I know different!"

Misty's parents and Laura made the trip to Wheeling to surprise her when she received her award. The Ritchie County ABE program is located at the Board of Education Office in Harrisville; the Pleasants County program is located at the Mid-Ohio Valley Technical Institute (PRT) in St. Marys; the Tyler class is the Sistersville First United Methodist Church. Anastasia Hilvers-Robbins works with Misty in Pleasants and Tyler Counties. ■



L-R: Kim McConnaughy, WVAEA, Inc. president, Laura Hughes, Misty, and her parents.

(Photograph taken by David Hollingsworth)

Thank you WVAEA, Inc.

Tri-County ABE GED recipients and ABE students would like to thank WVAEA, Inc. for providing the funding for new caps, gowns, and tassels to be used in the GED Recognition Ceremony. The gowns donated by Simonton Windows 15 years ago were starting to look pretty worn out. With the funds provided by the WVAEA, Inc. Mini Grant for Special Occasions, Tri-County ABE was able to purchase 10 sets of caps, gowns, and tassels. It added a special touch to the ceremony and will continue to do so. ■

Judy Azulay is chosen as the adult administrator of 2007

By Pam Bryan, Regional Technical Assistant

Judy Azulay, state director for Literacy West Virginia, was presented with the 2007 Adult Administrator of the Year award at the annual fall conference at Oglebay.

Judy has been an outstanding advocate for adults with low level skills. She has worked with literacy students in various capacities for many years. In 1996 she became the state coordinator for West Virginia Laubach Literacy. Her enthusiasm and expertise in this area have served the organization very well. In fact, when West Virginia Laubach and Literacy Volunteers of West Virginia merged, she became director for the new combined literacy partnership, Literacy West Virginia.

Judy is a trainer for the Ruby Payne, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. In 1995, Judy and Pam Makricosta created a pilot training module for adult basic education (ABE) instructors to address the needs of low level readers. She worked with the state professional development coordinator, Cathy Shank, to create Literacy 100, another training module.

Judy was trained by [Nancy] Payne and Associates in special learning needs assessment and accommodations. She has trained ABE teachers and literacy personnel by providing the professional development module, Special Learning Needs 200.

Wood County presented the 2006-2007 Partner of Excellence award

By Ray Pyles, Wood County Technical Center Assistant Director

The WorkForce West Virginia Youth Advantage Program presented Wood County's adult basic education (ABE) program with the 2006-2007 Partner of Excellence Award, and honored Linda McCLead, adult basic education (ABE) instructor for Wood County Schools with the 2006-2007 Positive Influence Award.

Linda was honored for professional education services rendered to clients of the WorkForce West Virginia on both the local and regional levels. She was recognized for the assistance she provided to clients related to classroom tutoring, resume preparation, personal development self-esteem workshops, and related activities.



Judy Azulay proudly displays her award with Kim McConaughy, WVAEA, Inc. president.

(Photograph taken by David Hollingsworth)

She currently directs the AmeriCorps Building A *Community of Champions* program, as well as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and the federally funded Telemachus Mentoring Program. Judy is also the partnership development/grants director at Monroe County Schools. She has written several grants that have benefited both Monroe County and Literacy West Virginia. Currently, Judy is a member of the Region I WorkForce Investment Board.

Judy has taught ABE and trains teachers and tutors of both adults and children. She is a firm believer in "no specific learning occurs without a significant relationship." Judy provides leadership and vision to her staff, her ABE friends, and Literacy West Virginia groups across the state. ■

Justin Smith, case manager, Wood County Youth Advantage Program, and Bill Monterosso, director, WorkForce West Virginia, presented the awards. The ceremony was held June 26, 2007 at the Comfort Suites in Mineral Wells. Approximately 170 people representing government and business, and various community leaders were in attendance. ■

Fall professional development conference provides a relaxing atmosphere for learning

By Kathy Hollingsworth, WVABE Public Outreach Coordinator

On October 23-26, 2007 the annual fall professional development conference was held at Oglebay Park in Wheeling, WV. This year's theme, *21st Century Skills for Success*, focused on technology. This conference is sponsored by the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.) in collaboration with the Department of Education Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development, Literacy West Virginia, Department of Health and Human Resources, Division of Rehabilitation Services, and Regional Education Service Agencies.

Also, this year WVAEA, Inc. was pleased to announce that the GED Examiners joined us for the first time. Many participants felt that this worked well because it created unity among teachers and examiners.

The program offered 39 sessions on technology related topics, as well as sessions on critical thinking, motivating students, financial literacy, and GED math. A

Cyber-Café was set-up in one of the rooms to provide access for participants to check email, instant messages, etc.

Delegate Joe DeLong, Majority Leader (D-Hancock County) provided information on how to best reach policymakers on a local, state, and national level. (See page 20 for more information about this.)

Sixteen vendors set-up displays and provided information on the latest materials and tools for adult education. The vendors also provided door prizes to participants. Financial support was provided by the Department of Education's Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development, Health Plan of the Upper Ohio Valley, RAZE Tobacco Prevention Program, WesBanco, and United Coal Company. State Farm Insurance provided give-away items

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Student successes

Wood County adult basic education student writes and publishes book

By Judy Armstrong, Wood County ABE Instructor

Barbara Cozad, a student at the Wood County Adult Learning Center at Lakeview in Parkersburg, has written and published her first book. Barbara's book, *Pearls From Heaven*, contains her testimony of the how her life experiences have influenced her family, her friends, her values, and her self-esteem.

Barbara, who attends class with her husband, Ralph, and her sister-in-law, Jean, has her high school diploma and some college classes in her background. She is a role model for the younger students and such a joy to have in class. The picture shows Barbara with her husband and Governor Joe Manchin at the 2007 Wood County

Schools Partner-in-Education luncheon that was held at West Virginia University at Parkersburg.

Barbara held a successful book-signing at Borders Bookstore in Vienna on Saturday, November, 17, 2007. I am so proud to know her and to have her in my class.

If you would like additional information concerning Barbara and her book, please contact Judy Armstrong, ABE instructor at 420-9659 or armstrongjk@hotmail.com. ■

Hurray for Amanda Mullins!

By: Joy Walker, Career Development Consultant, McDowell County SPOKES

Another success story out of the McDowell County SPOKES Program! This is the story about a young lady that came into the SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Employment Success) program wanting and needing to make some important changes in her life. She was quiet and shy, but you could tell just by talking with her that she really wanted to seek a better life for herself and her children.

Amanda came into the program with her GED but had never had employment that would sufficiently support her family. She attended class regularly, worked diligently on her portfolio and showed a sincere desire to seek a better life for her family.

Transportation proved to be one of Amanda's biggest obstacles. Although she had once taken her written exam for her learner's permit and passed, it had expired due to her not being able to find support in the driving instruction requirement. When I met with Amanda and went over her self-sufficiency plan, we realized that attaining her driver's license was an essential key to her success. She again took the written test and passed. Now she had to find someone that would spend some time with her and allow her to practice driving so that she could take her driver's test. A special friend vowed to help her, and so Amanda began to practice supervised driving and parallel parking. She passed her test!

While Amanda was doing her part, Mike Stanley with the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) and I worked on a plan. Mike agreed that if



Amanda Mullins and her children proudly stand beside the car that was provided for her by DHHR.

Amanda found employment AND got her driver's license, he would help locate a car for her. So, our next assignment was to help Amanda find employment. I worked on interviewing skills with Amanda. We also worked on telephone skills. Remember, Amanda was quiet and shy. Since she had a hard time role playing with me, I chose another route. I asked Amanda to go into an office by herself and I gave her a script to follow. I went over the script with her on how I felt she should try and portray herself. I told her that she needed to work on her voice being audible, strong, and confident.

She then went to Walmart with her resume in hand and applied for a job. A few days later, I had Amanda make the phone call to follow up on her application. The process took about two weeks, which seemed like forever for both of us but her hard work paid off. She got the job, she got the car and every time I see her, I can tell that she has also gained some confidence. So...kudos to Amanda – good job! ■

Mercer County “Makes a Difference”

By Marcy Ware, Mercer County Academy of Adult Learning Coordinator

Janet Carden, LifeBridge AmeriCorps member at the Mercer County Academy of Adult Learning, spearheaded a food drive in conjunction with WorkForce West Virginia and the learning center. Approximately 900 food items were collected and donated to the Bluefield Union Mission as a result of “Make a Difference Day.”



These food items will assist many families throughout Mercer County. Pictured are Craig Hammonds, director of Bluefield Union Mission; Janet Carden, AmeriCorps member; and Teresa Meadows, Region I, WorkForce West Virginia manager. ■

CJ Mitchell: A life changing for the better!

Submitted by Kathy Winkler, Instructor at the Bluefield office of the Mercer County Academy of Adult Learning
(Reprinted with permission from Bluefield Daily Telegraph)

Since this article first appeared in the Bluefield Daily Telegraph, CJ has taken classes at Bluefield State College and is now in his first semester at Boyce College in Louisville, KY!!!

CJ Mitchell is going from tragedy to triumph. The West Virginia native once hauled basketball down court in the West Virginia state tournament as point guard for the Mercer Christian Academy Cavaliers. Then low grades brought on by a raft of personal problems sent him into a self-described “greatest depression of my life.” He dropped out of school.

Now, with the help of the Mercer County Academy of Adult Learning, he has attained a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and has been accepted at Boyce College, a Christian School in Louisville, KY, where he has “a good chance” of starting as point guard for the Bulldogs. He signed a letter of intent with Boyce in April.

CJ will pursue a musical ministry major, a career path that goes to his roots. “My whole family sings. I’ve known since I was little that I was supposed to be doing music. But just recently I have decided that it was going to be what I pursued the rest of my life.”

“When I was 7, I was singing for the governor in Charleston. ... I’ve been doing music for a pretty long time.”

He can look back on his high school problems now as being “bad” - in a great way. “The things that happened at Mercer Christian, they taught me something that I could never have learned myself. ... They taught me structure, they taught me to deal with situations. They taught me to work for the things that I wanted in life.

“I graduated in May with my GED. It’s not the way I imagined, but it’s a step toward my future, so any way that I can move on, I’m glad to do that.”

He had help from his mother, Bonita, his friends on the MCA team, and the Mercer County Academy of Adult Learning. “Through all the things that happened... people like my mother never looked at me as a failure.... They kept me strong. And now that I’m

doing better, they never changed their relationships. They’re still the same great people.”

Bonita Mitchell said, “From the time all my children were small, it was always a major thing I stressed, that education changes your life. But even more than education was the teaching of values, and that there is a Higher Power.”

“Bad things happen in life, but we have to learn that all things work together for the good. Some of the things that happened to him, by themselves they were not good, but because we know that God is the ultimate Power, we cannot be destroyed.

“I just teach my children that when things are difficult, that is not the time to stop. That is the time to try harder. And that’s exactly what he did.”

Bonita added, “We believe that if you work hard, and continue to do the things that are right, then things will work out for the good.” She was “elated” that he has chosen to continue his education. “For over a year, he has been searching. People looked at him and said, ‘Oh, once you drop out of school, the statistics say people don’t go back.’ But he went back, finished his GED and now has a plan. “It wasn’t the plan A, but in life, I’ve taught them to always have a plan B.”

“At some point, you have to let them go and let them do what you have taught them ... to embrace your future, and move toward your destiny, at all costs.”

When asked what she was proud of that will help CJ succeed, she said, “Integrity is the one thing I’m glad to see he has — a seed that



a life changing for the better! . . .

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has started within his heart and within his soul, that he will continue to nurture and grow.

“So I’ve given the world one of the greatest things that I could give them: A black

male with integrity, that’s going to bless and help many other people and many other cultures.” ■

Eckman Learning Center honors GED graduates in restored historic site

By Annette Shumate, Director of Catholic Community Services, McDowell County

On a stormy Thursday evening, June 14, the Eckman Learning Center in McDowell County honored its 10 most recent GED graduates with a ceremony and dinner at the historic Ashland Company Store.

The honorees were Joseph Steele, class valedictorian with the highest cumulative GED score; Carla Hamilton, salutatorian; Debra Graham, honor graduate; Donna Caves; Carolyn Comer; Nicole Hoffman; Shelia Hunley; Amanda Mullins; Vennie Murphy; and Brandi Shumate.

Dressed in traditional caps and gowns, the graduates processed into the room to the musical accompaniment of “Pomp and Circumstance.” Annette Shumate, director of Catholic Community Services and the Learning Center, welcomed the graduates and guests.

Guest speaker, Dr. Howard P. Wade of Maybeury, offered words of wisdom and encouragement to the honorees, their families and friends. He urged those present to fight against stereotypes and despair and to take pride in being from McDowell County. A history professor at Bluefield State College, Dr. Wade has served as a GED social studies and language arts teacher at the Learning Center for several years.

Current ABE/GED instructor Johnny Tolliver and former instructor Jarred Cantrell also addressed the crowd of about 70. Jarred emphasized lifelong learning, while John spoke briefly of being honored to teach these students. Both men then assisted Annette Shumate with the awarding of certificates and special gifts.

After the traditional turning of the tassels, Regina Pickett, family literacy coordinator for Catholic Community Services, read an inspirational



Seated, L-R: Brandi Shumate, Amanda Mullins, Nicole Hoffman, and Carla Hamilton. Standing, L-R: Jarred Cantrell, Johnny Tolliver, Shelia Hunley, Debra Graham, Annette Shumate, and Dr. Howard Wade.

poem entitled “People Come Into Your Life for a Reason.” Immediately following, all attendees enjoyed a meal catered by the Coal Camp Café, a restaurant located in the building.

Graduate Nicole Hoffman remarked, “It [the ceremony and the celebration] was all so much more than I expected.”

Students and guests were impressed by the location of the graduation ceremonies. The recently opened Ashland Company Store is an early 20th Century coal camp company store building restored and operated by Travel Beautiful Appalachia, Inc. (TBAI). The store is strategically located near the new KOA campground and the McDowell County trailhead for the Hatfield and McCoy ATV trail. According to TBAI, its projects focus on tourism and economic development that reflect “the unique history, character, and culture of the southern West Virginia coal heritage.” In addition to the Coal Camp Café, the Ashland store contains a small business incubator; a retail area offering locally made arts and crafts, food items, music, and books—all with a local or West

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Eckman graduation . . .

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Virginia connection; and a commercial kitchen for local entrepreneurs who wish to make, market, and sell their edible goods. TBAI has also conducted seminars in entrepreneurship, operating a bed and breakfast, and becoming a landlord, among others.

According to Annette Shumate, the learning center hopes to collaborate more with TBAI, especially on projects that link workforce education and new economic development. "TBAI has exactly the kind of creative people and ideas that McDowell County needs to improve the overall economic situation here. Many of our GED graduates may

eventually find jobs in the county that pay a living wage because of TBAI's efforts. Even better, they may create their own jobs based on their unique talents or interests."

In conclusion, the Eckman Learning Center is certainly proud of its 2007 GED graduates. Some have gone on to obtain jobs in the mining industry, retail, restaurants, childcare, and health care fields, while others have entered higher education. We look forward to having another wonderful celebration in 2008. ■

Tributes to "family members"

We miss you David!

By current and former members of his ABE family

David Coccari, regional coordinator of adult education in RESA I and RESA IV, retired in June of 2007. Prior to coming to West Virginia in 1990, David was director of Day Programs at Greene County Association for Retarded Citizens in Pennsylvania.

In 1990, he was hired by RESA IV as the coordinator for the statewide homeless program in West Virginia. In addition to his responsibilities as regional coordinator, David served on the statewide on-site monitoring team and strategic planning team. He was a member of the board of directors of the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA, Inc.) where he also held the office of president, and spearheaded the creation of BOLT (Building Opportunities for Learning Together), the student affiliate of WVAEA, Inc. He was chair of Laubach Literacy and, when Laubach merged with Literacy Volunteers of America – West Virginia in 2003, he was elected chairman of the newly formed Literacy West Virginia.

David touched the lives of many adults who needed the "TLC" that only David could give. These adults included not only students, but teachers, tutors, and fellow administrators as well. Following is what some of his co-workers from the present and past have to say about the years and dedication David gave to the adult basic education (ABE) and literacy program in West Virginia.

Kathy Hollingsworth



People who worked with David knew that he liked to talk about the "different hats" that he wore to explain his widespread responsibilities with adult education and literacy. The hats referred to his work as chair of West Virginia Laubach Literacy, as an ABE Regional Coordinator, as a GED examiner, an Even Start program evaluator, and an ABE trainer. And although he was comfortable with each hat and skilled at selecting the right one for the occasion, the hat that always seemed to fit him the best involved interaction with students. He would travel to Weirton for a literacy program student recognition ceremony, attend an ESL citizenship party in Oak Hill, schedule a GED test to accommodate one student in Marlinton, and bring his family to a BOLT picnic in Beckley. It was clear that David's commitment to adult education originated with the students. He was enthusiastic about their accomplishments, concerned for their struggles, and interested in their opinions. And they loved him for it.

Shalom Tazewell

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We miss you David . . .

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“Fayette County ABE had a standing joke with David Coccari – If we had students at every computer, at every table, in the study room, on the teachers’ computer, out in the hall, encroaching over into the next room, in the bathroom, smoking at the gate, in the lunch room, in the principal’s office, loitering at the high school, or loose somewhere in the building, David Coccari would not show up – But give us one lazy, slow day to prop up our feet, read the newspaper, catch up on the e-mail, go to the bathroom, or take a minute to eat lunch, and here he would come. We called these days David Coccari Days! Without a doubt every single time – there he was! He was as predictable as the Official Practice Test.

So now, there is no hope for us in Fayette County – no more David Coccari Days – no down time – no lazy days - no days off for good behavior – no let’s get caught up on the files kind of days. We’ve lost our David Coccari Days forever! Please, David, come back and give us a BREAK – we need to goof off a little.... We truly miss seeing you and wish that you would at least **once** catch us overworked, understaffed, misused, abused, hungry, and unappreciated – As we always say, “They don’t call this the “Big House” for nothin’...!” Miss you in Fayette County and Happy Retirement! Thanks for all your support and encouragement over the years.

Mary Lynn Flint

ABE billboards will be posted soon near you!

By Kathy Hollingsworth
ABE Public Outreach Coordinator

The statewide adult basic education billboard campaign has begun. Our billboards, the same as last year, should be popping-up near you soon. This year we are proud to announce that we



“As we pass through life, we meet a variety of people – each with their own unique stories to tell. David Coccari, however, is one of the best storytellers you will ever find! One of my first memories of David was a long conversation we had about his experiences on the road with a rock band (prior to his life in adult education). David is a vivid storyteller who can make even a dull subject come to life! His fascinating accounts of his life experiences always kept me enthralled – and wondering, I admit, if some of those things really happened! But that’s the sign of a good storyteller – the listener can’t differentiate fact from fiction. Beyond his storytelling, however, David always provided an interesting perspective on adult education issues. He could think ‘outside of the box’ and often danced to his own drummer (obviously a hold-over from his days on the road with the rock band). David worked behind the scenes and encouraged others to be their very best. His leadership with WV Laubach Literacy was one example. One of my favorite poems, Come to the Edge by Christopher Logue, sums up David’s leadership style very nicely.

Come to the edge.

We might fall.

Come to the edge.

It’s too high!

COME TO THE EDGE!

And they came,

and he pushed,

and they flew.

Thanks to David, there are many teachers, tutors, and students in West Virginia who are flying on their way! Best of luck, David, with your future endeavors. And keep telling those stories! ■

Kathi Polis, former Assistant Director of Adult Education,
WV Department of Education; currently President of
Strategic Training and Resources, Inc.

will have coverage in the Eastern Panhandle thanks to a new agency that has joined in our campaign - Kegerreis Outdoor Advertising. So, start looking for these billboards in your neighborhood! ■

The adult basic education family mourns one of its long-time instructors

By Dottie Cosner, Mineral County ABE Instructor

Cheryl Vrcich, a dear friend, advocate, and teacher of Adult Basic Education at the Mineral County Technical Center (MCTC) passed away on June 4, 2007, after a courageous nine-month battle with cancer. Cheryl was born as a baby boomer in Pittsburgh on June 26, 1954. She “boomed” her way for 14 years in Mineral County as a substitute teacher before becoming an Adult Education Instructor in 2001. Before coming to Mineral County, Cheryl managed Learning World and volunteered as an ESL teacher in Seattle.

Sharing some comments from former students and others may help you get a picture of Cheryl. A former GED graduate and mother of a son who also completed his GED under Cheryl’s tutelage before entering the armed services, described her as “not your typical teacher. She was different! I really liked her.” Those words certainly describe Cheryl. She was “one of a kind.” She encouraged students to use their minds when they thought they had no abilities. One student’s grandmother had nothing but praise for the help Cheryl gave her granddaughter who attended classes for two years before passing her GED test. A successful SPOKES student described her as “someone who enjoyed her work helping people to better their lives as well as being very, very kind and always willing to help.” Her Sunday school teacher said that Cheryl was mostly a listener, but when she spoke, everyone listened. If you knew her, you’d agree. Her words were always meaningful.

Cheryl worked hard for six years to make the ABE program in Mineral County a productive one. Even during her battle with cancer, she continued to

give input as she could. She organized and taught GED, ESL, Computer Literacy, Pre-LPN and LPN Math Prep Classes.

She is surely missed by her friends at MCTC and in adult education, but her desire would be for them, and you, to do what an anonymous poet wrote: ■

If I should die and leave you here awhile,
Be not like others sore, who keep long vigils by the
silent dust, and weep.

For my sake turn again to life and smile,
Nerving thy heart and trembling had to do,
Something to comfort other hearts than thine.
Complete these dear unfinished tasks of mine,
And I, perchance may therein comfort you.



“Her Sunday school teacher said that Cheryl was mostly a listener, but when she spoke, everyone listened. If you knew her, you’d agree. Her words were always meaningful.”

Delegate Joe DeLong offers advice on communicating with policymakers

By Ellen Killion, ABE Specialist and Pam Bryan, ABE Coordinator

Special Interest Stories



Delegate Joe DeLong, 1st District, presented a session at the fall conference on “Communicating with the Press and Policymakers.” His session offered tips for people who want to effectively influence their policymakers.

DeLong stated that politicians pay more attention to people who are “historical voters” — those voters who vote in local and primary elections as well as in main elections. Politicians recognize that historical voters have the ability to change the outcome of elections because they go to the polls. Historical voters also tend to have a lot of influence on which person their friends and family members vote for in elections.

Your politicians know if you vote and how often. When you call your politician with an issue, he often will pull up your voting record to see if he should take the time to really hear what you have to say. In a few seconds, he knows if you are an active voter and in which elections you voted. Most elected officials know that you are the boss! You have more power than you know, **if** you are an active voter. If you are not an active voter, the politician will be less likely to put any effort into helping you, because you pose very little threat to their position.

According to DeLong, the greatest asset to any incumbent is apathy. Apathy leads to a lack of accountability on the part of the politician. When voters become apathetic, they do not vote, which is an advantage to an incumbent—even an

incompetent one! The way to combat apathy is to remember that you are the boss. You must also become an active voter.

Before calling a politician, it is important to get the facts straight about the issue that interests you. In order to be seen as credible, you must be educated about the issue before presenting it to the politician. So make sure you do your homework.

If you have an issue you would like addressed, it is always best to start at the most basic level of government and then work your way up if necessary. Also, get other people involved. Ask them to make calls and write letters also.

It is also very important to follow up a phone call with a letter. Hold your politicians accountable. In your follow-up letter, ask your politician to respond back by a specific date. Show respect for their ability and let them know you appreciate their consideration of the matter.

The last two weeks of the legislative session are normally when bills get passed. If you have a particular bill you are interested in, you should track the bill online to follow its progress. You also need to work it in order to see it through the process to become a bill. If you want to change a politician’s mind, it is necessary to do so while the bill is still in committee. Many bills “die” in committee because they don’t make it to the floor to be voted upon. So, if a bill is important to you, it is critical that you contact your politician first by phone and then with a follow-up letter.

You do have a voice and can influence both government and policy. Become an active voter and make a difference! ■

“Most elected officials know that you are the boss! You have more power than you know, **if** you are an active voter. . . Become an active voter and make a difference!”

Tri-county ABE students visit the Laurel Highlands in Pennsylvania

By Misty Dawson, Pleasants/Ritchie/Tyler Adult Basic Education Instructor/Coordinator

On June 6th Tri-County adult basic education (ABE) students spent the day in the Laurel Highlands of Pennsylvania. Students from all three counties participated in the trip. The trip began with a visit to Ohiopyle State Park. Students were able to enjoy the beauty of three different waterfalls, venture on walking trails, and explore the local town.

After a picnic lunch at Ohiopyle, the next stop was Fort Necessity. Students went through an interactive museum detailing the start of the French and Indian war and the building of the National Road. Afterwards students were able to visit the remains of the actual fort.

The next stop was Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater. The students were given a detailed tour through the house and were able to explore the grounds around it. "It was amazing to me how you could walk right down to the waterfall from inside of the house" said Laura Hughes of Harrisville.



Front Row: Ralph E Dennis III, Michelle Kerns, Laura Hughes, Alicia Flannery, Lisa Coon - Second Row: Crystal Lewis, Judy Carpenter, Freda Mossor, Misty Dawson, Stephanie Fuller, Bonnie Mirbach, Kayla Cain, Bill Carter - Back Row: Sue Whitlach, Joshua Rollins, Dekota Taylor, Martin Carpenter, Krista Baker, Becky Buchanan, Charlie Williams, June Carter, Megan Edwards, Anastasia Hilvers, Jeff Sheets



Charlie Williams, Freda Mossor, Crystal Lewis, Darlene Siers, Michelle Kerns

The last stop was at the Christian W. Klay Winery. Students were taken on a hay ride across the vineyards by Ray Matthews. He provided in depth information on how the grapes were raised, the proper conditions needed, and how they were harvested. He took time to answer any questions the students had during the tour. After the tour students over 21 years old were treated to a wine tasting. Those under 21 were given juice. The event was enjoyed by all. Alicia Flannery of Petroleum stated "I learned so much from the tour" while Bonnie Mirbach and Freda Mossor were heard on the bus ride home saying how much they had enjoyed themselves.

Funds for the trip were raised in a variety of ways. Students in the Harrisville Classes held a class yard sale/bake sale. The St. Marys and Sisterville students ran a food booth at the Onion Festival. Students from all three counties collected items from local businesses for a raffle. Tri-County ABE would like to thank all the individuals who contributed to our field trip and made it such a success. ■

**Everyone has inside himself a piece of good news!
The good news is that you really don't know how great you can be,
how much you can love, what you can accomplish, and what your potential is.**

ANNE FRANK

WVAEA, Inc. and Literacy West Virginia continue GED scholarship campaign

By Shalom Tazewell, ABE Instructor, Literacy West Virginia regional technical assistant, WVAEA, Inc. Legislative Committee Chair

Last year, the West Virginia House of Delegates passed a bill establishing a separate scholarship fund for GED students. Although that is considerable progress, the bill needs to pass both the Senate and the House. In August, Kathy Hollingsworth, Herb Rothwell, Eugene Milam, Pam Bryan, Shalom Tazewell, and Angela Dodd met with Senator Robert Plymale to discuss WVAEA, Inc.'s continuing efforts to establish a legislative fund for GED scholarships. As chair of the Senate Education Committee, Senator Plymale's support is crucial. He was very helpful and clearly appreciated the opportunity to talk with a GED student and a GED graduate. The following is Angela's account of the meeting.



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

Today was a wonderful experience for me, one I never could have imagined would have been possible for me. This year has opened a lot of doors for me, mostly because I went back to school to get my GED. Who would have thought that I would also be asked by my teacher to go with her to talk with Senator Plymale about a bill to establish GED scholarships for GED students? I was very surprised when Shalom Tazewell asked me to be a spokesperson for GED students who are taking or will be taking the GED test.

At first, I was so nervous, but then I relaxed because I thought Senator Plymale was just like me. He made me feel that what I had to say was important, that my words counted, that they had a purpose.

Eugene Milam was also at the meeting to help. He had taken classes and passed his GED test and is now a tutor at the library

helping students like me get ready for the test. He and Senator Plymale talked about different things such as the reasons for getting a GED, what the classes were like, about the obstacles that have to be overcome and the opportunities that are available to students.

When it was my turn to talk, I was nervous, but just said what was on my mind. I talked about how getting my GED was important to me and that I may not have gone back to school if it were not for my son. I told the senator how strongly I feel about the GED program and how determined I am. I explained that I was in special education from the sixth grade to the time I dropped out of school but that now I'm doing great. When he asked me what I was going to do after I got my GED, I told him that I wanted to go to college to become a special education teacher.

No matter what—don't doubt yourself because anything is possible. You can do anything you set your mind to. I would have never thought that anything like this would happen to me and that I would be writing about it now. ■

Angela Dodd, LAMP Student

Note:

It's not too early to contact your West Virginia Senators and Delegates about supporting the GED scholarship legislation. For contact information, go to <http://www.legis.state.wv.us>.

SPOKES student thanks program



My name is Karen. I was first in SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge and Employment Success) in June 2005. There are several reasons why I still come to this class. I have finished it and have my Ready To Work Certificate.

The main reason and most important is the teachers. They have helped me more than they will ever know. When I first came to the class I wasn't really sure what my future held for me. I had just lost my job at a Long Care facility. I still have my CNA license.

The teachers showed me how to make a great resume and I think that helped me get the great job I love. I never really thought that I had what it took to work in an office until they gave me encouragement to send in my resume. I did and I got a good job in a doctor's office where they are real friendly and help me do a good job.

I am also taking classes at home for Medical Transcriptionist. In the beginning I knew very little about computers, but I am learning more everyday. If I have any questions the teachers are right there to help me. I also do not like to be alone. So when I come to class, that is taken care of. I can help other people with things they get stuck on.

This class has really helped me in many ways. Not only did it help me get a great job, but it helped me get my life back on track. They have different speakers scheduled. One spoke about credit and that helped me a lot.

I have also made a lot of friends which was really hard for me. The class has given me a better out look on

life. It surely has made me think that with a little help and knowledge anything is possible. They have modules to help you in the work force and inform you of what your rights are.

I am sure that with the encouragement the teachers have given me that I will further not only my career, but also my education. I know a lot more about computers than I did in the beginning and I hope to learn even more. The teachers are always right there to help with any questions you might have not only about school, but in your personal life as well. If they can't help, then they will find someone who can.

I do not think I would be where I am today if it had not been for this class and the teachers that teach here. I hope to continue down here as long as they let me, because my dad always said "Your day is never wasted if you learn something new." I hope to always live by that and always learn something new daily.

If I had to rate this project then I would give it an (A+) because it does good for people like myself who really want to learn and get back into the work force and do better for themselves and their families.

In final thoughts I would like to say, "Thank You SPOKES," for teaching me that anything can be done with the right knowledge and support. I am glad that you let me continue to come here so that I can further my education. ■

How the SPOKES class helped me

By Vera Bennett, student at Roane-Jackson Technical Center

I became a part of the SPOKES class as a referral from DHHR. At the time I was thinking—what are they putting me through? I had a lot of doubt about this program wondering what they could do for me because I had already completed high school. I thought it was a waste of my time and the state's money. If you ever get the chance to go through this program, don't miss the chance to take it. It is a great program.

The SPOKES program helps you with things you have forgotten in reading and math. One of the advantages of this class is the computer skills you

receive. You work with Microsoft Word and Excel. One of my favorite tasks that we did was the Power Point presentations. Another thing that is great is you learn how to do resumes, cover letters, and thank you letters and how to ace an interview.

This program has given me the self esteem I needed and the encouragement that I needed to take the LPN class. I never thought I would get the chance to do the LPN class considering I did not do it when I was younger. Now I have passed the entrance exam for the LPN class and I am the first one on the waiting list for this year's class. My

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How the SPOKES class helped me . . .

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teachers are great with being helpful and giving a lot of encouragement to all of us in whatever we decided to do or be. The SPOKES class has helped me see the good qualities I have and not to focus on the weakness and to change the weakness to an advantage not a disadvantage. The DHHR is very helpful also if you do exactly what they ask.

I have also received a certificate for completing the customer service program. I believe both programs are great to go through. Without going through these programs I don't think I would have had the wisdom or the courage to go and try to become a nurse. Now I feel confident that within the next five years I

will be working full-time as a nurse. I very much want to thank all of the people who helped me get through these programs. ■



fall professional development conference . . .

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for the registration packets, along with many other businesses that provided door prizes.

Wheeling Park High School's music program provided entertainment during lunch on Wednesday and Thursday.

Health Plan of the Upper Ohio Valley provided a free health screening for all participants. They also sponsored *A Walk with Joy!* Over 25 people walked around the park and enjoyed the spectacular scenery while getting a great workout. Some people went the "extra mile" but some took the low road and returned within 15 minutes. All walkers received a free pedometer and a t-shirt for participating.

On Thursday evening, 82 participants boarded two busses provided by Marshall County Schools and went to the *Dungeon of Horrors*, a haunted house at the former WV penitentiary at Moundsville. Some

were locked in prison cells, some were caught in mazes, and even some brave souls decided to take a ride in a coffin. And, of course, there were those who had to go to the gift shop for t-shirts and other souvenirs. (And yes, all 82 did return to Oglebay) The conference wrapped-up with the awards brunch on Friday morning. Throughout this issue of *Networks* you will see many articles about these award winners and will read about how they earned these prestigious awards.

Many people from around the state representing ABE, literacy, rehabilitation services, DHHR, and GED testing served on the conference committee to make it such a success. If you would like to serve on this committee next year, contact Kim McConnaughy, president of WVAEA, Inc., at kmcconna@access.k12.wv.us. ■

**Deadline for April issue:
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