

Warren County steps up for higher education

Are you ready for an amazing and exciting story? Perhaps our most important priority is the higher education of our youth. Elevating the education level of our county will result in dramatic increases in wealth, reduction in crime, and improvement in our quality of life.

There are many statistics that support that claim. Frankly, this needs to happen to increase our odds of successful industrial recruiting, encourage retirees to locate here, and to support our overall economic prosperity. We have been losing to adjacent and nearby counties over the last five years on most of these counts. What has changed?

Over the last four years, there has been a dedicated coalition of elected politicians, education leaders, and business leaders (Business Roundtable Action Committee - BRAC) that have collaborated towards achievement with the higher education of our youth at our own Motlow State Community College campus and the Tennessee Technology Center. With funding provided through our retired state Sen. Jerry Cooper, our Motlow-McMinnville campus was doubled in size during the 2007-08 academic year. This facility is very impressive and has seen student enrollment rise from 650 in 2007 to 1,150 this fall semester. What has the above coalition been able to accomplish?

1. We started a local two-year tuition free education program for local graduating high school seniors called Citizens for Progress (CFP) that was the second such program in Tennessee. This was launched in the fall of 2007.

We have raised a total of \$186,990 for this scholarship program over three years and have awarded \$71,184 in scholarships (\$17,725 more pending for spring 2010). The steering committee for CFP will consider expansion of benefits to local students going forward.

2. Starting in December 2008, our coalition focused on creation of funding for launching a new education program at Motlow-McMinnville called Mechatronics. This exclusive launch (within four Motlow campuses) will occur with the spring semester next January. This will be the first such program offered in the state of Tennessee. It was approved by the Tennessee Board of Regents last June.

Mechatronics brings system training skills in computers, mechanics, and electronics to develop students for placement in manufacturing and other technical career paths. Raised since December to current is \$158,000 specifically for Mechatronics. This has the complete endorsement and support of BRAC. Special thanks to John Pelham, our County Executive, Jeff McCormick, our IDB Industrial Recruiter, and retired state Sen. Jerry Cooper for making many presentations locally to encourage support for this program.

3. The Motlow State Community College Board of Trustees in December 2008 at President Dr. MaryLou Apple's request did grant \$150,000 to the launch of the Mechatronics at Motlow-McMinnville. The Board made this commitment in stormy economic times with a matching challenge to Warren



County.

4. With collaboration from Dr. Apple, John Pelham, and Jeff McCormick, an application was made with the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for a matching funds grant to help launch the Mechatronics program at Motlow-McMinnville. This application was successful for \$250,000.

The specialized equipment training system for Mechatronics has been ordered with this extra support. Keep in mind that Motlow State Community College has been in a reduction mode with reduced education funding, making this launch all the more remarkable.

Have you kept track? If you add the above achievements together, the local coalition has raised almost \$745,000 aimed at the higher education of our youth. That has been done over three years with many people involved and with a lot of effort. I believe this effort is unprecedented in our local history, and reflects a commitment resolve to improve our situation that has no parallel.

I was interviewed on Channel 6 in Tullahoma regarding our Mechatronics launch on May 14 along with Brenda Lewis (VP) and Darrell Cantrell (then Mechatronics director) from Motlow State

Community College. The moderator of this public cable channel in Coffee County is a prominent attorney. The show airs on a regular basis. Off camera, the host kept asking why is an exciting program like Mechatronics getting launched in Warren County

and not Coffee County or more specifically Tullahoma. Lewis finally said, "Warren County put up the money and Tullahoma didn't."

Please see below the contribution accounting for both CFP and Mechatronics. I suggest you thank the forward

looking firms and our elected officials who made the commitments to our future. They say "talk is cheap." There is no hiding in our raising \$745,000 for the higher education of our youth in three years. That is absolutely outstanding.

CITIZENS FOR PROGRESS & MECHATRONICS TOTAL FUNDING 2006 through 2009

Contributor	Funding Total	Non-Profit:	
Federal Funds:		Adult Literacy Council	\$5,944
Appalachian Regional Commission (federal)	\$250,000	Three-Year Total for Higher Education	\$744,990
TVA	\$5,000	Citizens for Progress Scholarships - \$186,990	Scholarships awarded to date - \$71,184
Motlow Board of Trustees	\$150,000	Mechatronics Program Funding	\$558,000
State Funds:		Corporate Business:	
Sen. Cooper/Roller	\$27,000	River Park Hospital	\$10,000
Rep. Charles Curtiss	\$17,000	Bridgestone	\$6,000
Rep. Judd Matheny	\$17,000	Jarden Consumer Solutions	\$5,000
City of McMinnville (& IDB)	\$57,000	Hillis Company LLC	\$5,000
Warren County	\$25,000	Walmart	\$4,000
Utilities:		Southern Mfg. Group	\$2,500
McMinnville Electric Systems	\$20,000	Dr Pepper Bottling Company	\$2,500
Ben Lomand Telephone Coop	\$16,000	Multi-Source	\$1,500
Warren County Water Utility	\$10,000	Pioneer Building Supply	\$1,000
Caney Fork Electric	\$10,000	Coalition Steering Committee:	
Middle Tennessee Nat. Gas	\$2,500	Todd Herzog (BRAC), Chair, Bobby Cox (WC Education), Steve Stanger (BRAC), Bonnie Collier (WC Education), David Wideman (BRAC), Tracy Risinger (WC Education), Rodney Boyd (BRAC), Bill Zechman (WC School Board), Bruce Johnson (BRAC), Alicea Weddington (Chamber), Rachel Gauger-Byars (BRAC), Ray Cantrell (Chamber), John Pelham (WC Executive), Melody Edmonds (Motlow-McM), Norman Rone (McMinnville Mayor), Dr. MaryLou Apple (Motlow), Marvin Lusk (Tenn. Tech. Ctr.).	
Banks:			
First National Bank	\$17,500		
Security Federal Savings Bank	\$15,000		
Homeland Community Bank	\$10,000		
Citizens Tri-County Bank	\$3,000		
Regions Bank	\$200		
Charity Events:			
WillowBrook Pro-Am Golf	\$30,339		
Bud Godwin Gospel Singing	\$5,507		
Personal donations:			
Todd & Kathy Herzog	\$12,500		
Ozie Allen & Family	\$1,000		

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