



Pocahontas County New Economy Planning Workshop 9/4/08 Summary Notes

EDUCATION

- “Learning Communities” should augment current learning environment in schools – not everyone learns the same way
- Unstructured time is lacking in school environment
- At-risk kids, creative expression, gifted.
- Locked in by funding structure.
- Limited time
 - ❖ Staff training is a challenge
- Teachers living off past teaching models.
 - ❖ Only 3days/yr training.
- Teacher leader program
 - ❖ How to project learn
 - ❖ Technology use.
- Schools meeting state/federal requirements.
- Superintendent of schools: “Graduation rate- 87%, 72% go to some college”
- Long bus rides – up to 2 hours *one way* for some children
- Lack of flexibility
- Accessibility to High School
 - ❖ Very remote
- More technology availability, infusion
- Most important question- Do you *want* to learn?

EDUCATION ASSETS

- Partnership with colleges- New River CC, Bluefield etc.
 - ❖ 2 yr certificate programs
- Career center
- Grades, communicate online- “Edline”

- Young retirees with skills
- Volunteerism strong
- Nationally ranked libraries
 - ❖ Music Programs
 - ❖ High Rocks Academy
 - ❖ Girls Program
 - ❖ Check-out cool equipment
 - ❖ Strong board members
- Fairs/ festivals
- MountainQuest – not enough awareness, not well understood – but big asset
- 1million acres of national forest
 - ❖ Partnership with schools
- Pearl Buck birthplace
 - ❖ Writers workshop
- Snowshoe
- New, fresh Teachers
- Alleghany Echoes
 - ❖ Observatory, good outreach
 - ❖ State Park System
- Opera House
- Zendik arts complex

IDEAS/OPTIONS

- Adult Learning Communities – integrate adults into learning communities with kids
- “Bus Learning” – fill that 1-2 hours of bus ride with stimulating learning opportunities
 - ❖ Music, video, projects
- After school learning centers
 - ❖ Churches etc.
- MountainQuest partnership
 - ❖ Exposure to visiting scholars
 - ❖ Monthly county learning – “ third place”
- Public-private partnerships- career center
 - ❖ Snowshoe workforce
- E-learning initiative

TECHNOLOGY

- Local broadband committee is active and expecting response from Frontier study soon

- 80-85% DSL coverage – rare for such rural county
- NRAO (120 Ph.D.'s) – quiet zone
 - ❖ 10 mile strict
 - ❖ 100 mile total
- Social networking – use of Facebook, MySpace?
 - ❖ E-learning
- Living classrooms
 - ❖ Tourist learning exp.
- E-government services
 - ❖ Need for government technology modernization
 - ❖ Youth involvement
- NRAO
- Schools- Distance Learning Labs
- Career Center Lab
 - ❖ Cranking out GED's
- Library PC's
- Adult classes available
- Evaluate opportunities with WVU, Marshall, others
- GIS mapping?
- Community – based radio : 107.1FM, 1370AM
- 3 cell towers in county
- Library service subscriptions
- Lack of IT service
 - ❖ Providers, professionals
- Radio station, local web.

DIVERSITY

- Perception- not very inclusive
- Native vs. newcomer
- Racist groups- met resistance
- Snowshoe, libraries- proactive, international recruiters.
- Respect; protect- school programs- build confronters
 - ❖ Not well trained
 - ❖ Need consistency
- Build examples
- Proactive, welcome, outreach – Build a team around this before issues come up – Attach diversity to a tangible value embraced by most (ie, economic growth, quality of life)

QUALITY OF PLACE

- Birthplace of 8 rivers.
- Arts, Cultural, Historic Trails/ Maps
- Roadkill Festival
- Mountain Biking, Motorcycle
- Music artists, groups
- Lacking grocery, other retail
- Third Places
 - ❖ Unique Rest
 - ❖ Coffee Shops
- Marketing, local rest, shops
- Health, Dental Services lacking
- Places/ activities for young people
- Clubs
 - ❖ Birding
 - ❖ Hiking
- Proximity of schools
- Pocahontas oldest county- drawing Boomer retirees
- Housing availability
- Land planning opposition
- No OB-GYN
- Low crime rates- growing drug issue
- Emergency services- improving, burnout
- Faster B.B.
- Schools
- Health
- Social environment
 - ❖ Young families
 - ❖ Community minded
 - ❖ Upper Pocahontas Community Co-Op (UPCC)
 - ❖ 2020- revamped new group?
- New chamber of commerce
 - ❖ Need community plan
- Community centers

Summary Comments and Recommendations:

- Pocahontas County (PC) workshop had a wonderful, energetic, intelligent group of attendees – There is a strong basis for a successful new economy growth team – Consider migrating the 2020 team to become inclusive of all the interested parties and get to work on planning!
- PC has an opportunity with the NRAO and Mountain Quest Institute to tap into world class learning opportunities...If significant partnerships could be developed, this could be a fantastic *attractor* for well-educated creative sector entrepreneurs and workers. But it must be meaningful, and it must be marketed as an asset.
- The long bus rides need addressed....That is a ton of time to be on the bus being unproductive for any kid. But again, it's an opportunity. Great PR potential if unique learning pilots could be developed for those bus rides!
- The local team should draw up a list of entertainment, cultural, retail and service amenities that are missing, and then promote those needs to the community, ex-patriates who have left the county and others who might be interested in filling those needs via entrepreneurship. Consider building an entrepreneurship SWAT team with members from Chamber, Snowshoe, and NRAO.
- Build a Facebook group and begin to attract attention from ex-PC citizens who have moved away but want to stay connected. You never know when someone might want to move back, or perhaps invest in the county from afar.
- The potential to “brand” Pocahontas as a *rural intellectual center of excellence* is pretty large – NRAO, Pearl Buck house (with writers conference events?), Mountain Quest, etc. Few rural counties have such assets, plus the outdoor amenities....PC just needs branded and marketed while these improvements are made.

For questions, comments, or ongoing support, please contact Jeff James at jeffj@mythologymarketing.com or 304.346.2230 ext 101.

Good luck in building your creative community for the new economy!

