

# New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Wire

**BUILDING PATHWAYS. STRENGTHENING OUR REGION.**

*Proudly serving the counties of Bland, Carroll, Floyd, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pulaski, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe and the cities of Bristol, Galax, and Radford*

**At the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board, we believe in the potential of people and the value of building a strong, thriving region.**

We provide customized solutions to meet the needs of our businesses, job seekers, workers, and partners.

## WE CULTIVATE TALENT FOR THE REGION

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### Stay Informed

Visit our website to review previous *Workforce Wire* publications.

[vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/workforce-wire/2025](https://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/workforce-wire/2025)



[vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/?s=work+talk](https://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/?s=work+talk).

## Resources

#### Regional Workforce Dashboard

[vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/resources/regional-workforce-data](https://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/resources/regional-workforce-data)

#### Work-Based Learning Toolkit

[vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/resources/business-solutions](https://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/resources/business-solutions)

#### Regional Economic Indicators

[vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/regional-workforce-data/regional-economic-indicators](https://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/regional-workforce-data/regional-economic-indicators)

## A Legacy of Leadership. A Future in Motion.

After nearly 24 years of extraordinary service, our beloved Executive Director Marty Holliday officially retired on June 30. For nearly a quarter-century, Marty has shown up—boots on the ground, car on the road—bringing vision, strategy, and an unwavering commitment to building a stronger, more inclusive workforce system across Southwest Virginia. She's been a connector, a collaborator, and a catalyst—someone who believes in second chances and actively builds systems to make them possible.

From guiding our region toward Recovery Ready status to pioneering sector strategies and championing reentry and rural justice efforts, Marty's leadership has left an indelible mark. Her legacy is woven into the fabric of every innovative partnership, every grant project that opened a door, and every life changed along the way.

But while this marks the end of an era, it's not the end of her story with us. We're excited to share that Marty will return in August to lead special projects and continue her sector strategies work.

At the same time, we're proud to announce that Jenny Bolte has stepped into the role of Executive Director. Jenny brings a wealth of experience, compassion, and a deep understanding of the region's workforce landscape. She has worked alongside Marty for years, shaping and leading some of our most transformative efforts—including reentry initiatives, youth and recovery workforce strategies, and multi-jurisdictional partnerships.

Jenny first joined the Board in 2017 to lead the *Pathways to the American Dream* project. She came to the role with over 20 years of leadership experience in Adult Education and program development. Under Jenny's leadership, the *Pathways* project exceeded all of its performance targets and was recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor with multiple components highlighted as national best practices.

Over the course of her tenure at the board, Jenny has written and managed more than \$15M in grants across nine different projects, bringing much-needed resources to the region's businesses and helping individuals gain the in-demand skills needed to thrive in today's economy. Jenny actively engaged with businesses in the development of program strategies to ensure every initiative was aligned with real workforce needs and responsive to employer demand. "I'm honored to build on Marty's legacy," Jenny said. "Our focus moving forward is deep collaboration, responsive innovation, and keeping people—our talent—at the heart of everything we do." As she steps into this new role, Jenny does so with the benefit of a strong foundation and a trusted mentor by her side.

In true Marty fashion, her retirement isn't just an exit but a handoff. Marty is actively mentoring Jenny through this transition, offering her guidance, wisdom, and support as Jenny takes the helm. Together, they are ensuring a seamless continuity of leadership grounded in trust, collaboration, and purpose.

We thank Marty for her decades of service and vision and celebrate her exciting new chapter as we welcome Jenny into her new role and embrace a future in motion under her leadership.



*Marty Holliday (center) receives a special award of recognition from Board Chair Mike Miller (left) and CLEO Chair Mary Biggs (right) at the May 2025 board meeting. The presentation honored Marty's nearly 24 years of visionary leadership and service as Executive Director of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board.*

# Workforce in the Region

## *Connecting People. Powering Industry.*

From youth to adults, from justice-involved individuals to those in recovery, we're helping people across our region access training, find meaningful work, and build lasting careers.

Through programs like WIOA, YouthBuild, Pathway Home, WORC, HRSA Healthcare, and the Trades Gap initiative, we support both job seekers and employers across vital industries—from healthcare and manufacturing to IT, construction, and beyond.



## *Driving Growth Through Industry-Led Partnerships*

Throughout this quarter, we've kept the momentum going with regular meetings focused on advancing our sector partnership work across the region. One of the most exciting developments has been the launch of two new working groups designed to shape the future of the region's evolving Career Lattices—a visual tool to help job seekers, educators, and employers navigate high-demand career pathways.

We issued a call for passionate volunteers and were thrilled by the response.

**The Employer Working Group** is focused on identifying the essential skills needed for the first round of high-priority occupations targeted for lattice development.

**The Partner & Educator Working Group** is aligning existing training programs with those occupations and their associated skill needs.

To enhance the impact of this work, we've invested in Adobe Creative Cloud to redesign the Career Lattices with engaging, interactive features. These will include hover-enabled pop-ups that provide users with instant access to skill requirements, training options, and more—making the tool both intuitive and powerful.

Together, we're building more than just visual guides. We're building bridges to brighter futures. These Career Lattices will help connect people to opportunity, ensure education aligns with industry needs, and strengthen our region's talent pipeline. This is workforce development reimagined, and it's just the beginning.



## ***Workforce at a Crossroads: What the “One Big Beautiful Bill” Means for Our Region***

On July 4, President Trump signed the *One Big Beautiful Bill*, a sweeping law that restructures many federal social support programs and significantly alters the fiscal landscape for workforce development. While headlines have focused on tax changes and Medicaid, the potential impact on rural regions like ours—and the systems we’ve built—requires serious attention.

The law itself does not directly consolidate or eliminate programs like YouthBuild, WORC (Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities), or federal Reentry grants. However, these initiatives face heightened risk under the President’s FY26 discretionary budget proposal, which calls for merging or defunding 11 workforce programs under the “Make America Skilled Again” plan. If enacted, this budget framework would shift funding to broader state block grants that may lack the targeted rural and justice-involved components our communities depend on.

Over the past decade, these programs have helped returning citizens access training and jobs, enabled Opportunity Youth to earn diplomas and trade credentials, and supported coal-impacted communities in transition. These are not just programs—they represent people, families, and local employers finding the talent they need.

### **What This Could Mean for Us**

If the budget proposal is adopted, the resulting changes could mean a loss of targeted funding for rural innovation, Opportunity Youth, and reentry work, as well as tougher competition for general workforce dollars—funds that often skew toward urban centers.

This outlook is serious but not hopeless.

### **Where We Go From Here**

If we want our businesses to stay competitive and our people to thrive, every sector—public, private, and nonprofit—must come to the table with urgency and purpose. To sustain a strong workforce ecosystem, we must deepen our understanding of what resources remain, where gaps may emerge, and how we can align efforts to fill them. Only by working together—intentionally and strategically—can we ensure our region makes the most of every available opportunity.

To begin this conversation, we will host a special post-Symposium strategy session on September 9 from 3:30–4:30 PM at the Wytheville Meeting Center. This meeting will immediately follow the Workforce Symposium (see page 18 for registration information) and is open to all workforce partners. We’ll use this time to share information, assess resource shifts, and begin mapping how we coordinate efforts moving forward.

### **Our Immediate Focus in Taking Action:**

- Pursuing new funding through state opportunities, philanthropy, and private foundations
- Growing sector strategies and work-based learning models aligned with employer needs
- Promoting flexibility and collaboration in how workforce services are designed and delivered
- Strengthening partnerships with local governments, chambers, schools, and nonprofits

And most importantly, continuing to meet people where they are—providing training, support, and clear pathways to lasting employment.

### **Your Role in the Path Forward**

We need your insight and engagement. Whether you’re a business leader, elected official, educator, nonprofit partner, or simply someone who cares about the future of our region, this is a moment to lean in—together. Our region’s prosperity depends on a strong, skilled workforce. And a strong, skilled workforce depends on all of us pulling in the same direction.

Let’s make sure no opportunity goes untapped and no one gets left behind.



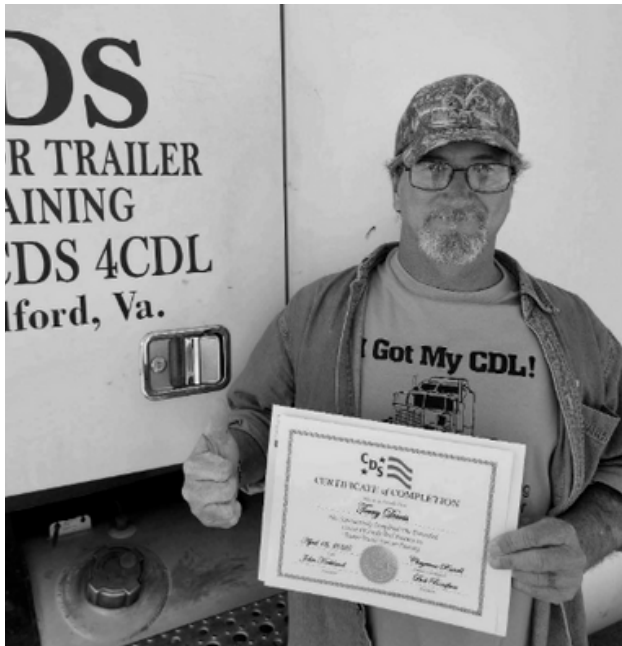
# Real People. Real Success.

## ***Workforce Success Starts with People***

Behind every job placement is a story of resilience and renewal. Workforce programs lead to employment, but more importantly they offer hope and opportunity to those facing real barriers like unemployment, reentry after incarceration, or the need to reskill later in life. When individuals succeed, communities grow stronger. Workforce development empowers people to build careers, support their families, and contribute to a thriving local economy. Investing in people is how we build a brighter, more equitable future for all.

### ***Terry's Journey from Rock Bottom to Rebuilding***

Terry's path has been marked by hardship, poor choices, and painful consequences—but also by growth, redemption, and a fierce determination to rewrite his story. At just ten years old, a reckless dare led to a break-in that spiraled into years spent in juvenile facilities. With no stable support system—an absent father, a strained relationship with his mother, and a younger brother unable to guide him—Terry struggled to break free from destructive patterns. Despite graduating high school with honors, his path veered into drug use and rebellion. Cocaine, first encountered in the workplace, became a decades-long battle.



In 2023, incarcerated once again, Terry found a turning point through the Home Builders Institute Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training offered by the NRMW Workforce Development Board, which reignited his interest in construction and connected him with support through the board's Department of Labor WORC and Pathway Home 5 grants. Terry began receiving the tools and encouragement he had long been missing.

When he was released in 2025 to Dorcas House, feeling abandoned and unsure of his next step, a call from his NRMW WDB Career Navigator, Dee, became a lifeline. She offered encouragement and essentials: clothing, a phone, a computer, and access to foundational training in life and work skills.

Now 51, Terry is embracing a future in construction and determined to give back to the community that offered him a second chance. His story is one of resilience and a powerful reminder that it's never too late to begin again.

Through his enrollment in the WORC and Pathway Home 5 programs, Terry received comprehensive support that laid the foundation for his reentry success—including a laptop to stay connected, uniforms and food assistance to meet immediate needs, tuition and books to pursue training, foundational skills instruction to rebuild confidence, drug screening to support job readiness, and ongoing wraparound services that ensured he never had to walk the journey alone.

*Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, the WORC and Pathway Home grants support individuals in rural communities and those transitioning from incarceration by providing job training, career navigation, and critical wraparound services. These programs help participants overcome barriers, gain in-demand skills, and successfully reenter the workforce.*

## ***Latesha—Answering the Call to Care***

Latesha grew up in Fairlawn surrounded by strong women who instilled in her the values of resilience, faith, and hard work. “Life wasn’t always easy,” she shared, “but I had a loving foundation that carried me through—even after losing my mom, Ms. Donna Hodge. She’s the reason I fell in love with healthcare.”



Inspired by her mother’s strength and spirit, Latesha became a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) while still in high school and began working in the field in 2014. Over the years, she continued to build her credentials, earning certifications in Phlebotomy and as a Certified Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA). But her journey hasn’t been without struggle.

“As a single mom raising my daughter, working PRN jobs, and commuting without reliable transportation, there were moments I thought about giving up,” Latesha admitted. “But nursing is my calling. I know I’m meant to help others.”

With support from the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board, particularly from her navigator Marjorie, Latesha found the encouragement and resources she needed to keep going. “Marjorie and the team believed in me when I was running on empty. Their support reminded me I wasn’t alone.”

Now on a steady path toward a fulfilling healthcare career, Latesha remains focused on her future and her daughter’s. “I want to give her a better life—and I want to live out my purpose. With God’s guidance and the right support, I know I will.”

Latesha was enrolled in the HRSA and Trades Gap grants, receiving assistance with tuition and a Work-Based Learning stipend.

## ***New Talent on the Frontlines: Certified Clinical Medical Assistants Graduates Ready to Serve***



This initiative is supported through our HRSA-funded healthcare workforce program in partnership with the Virginia Rural Health Association. CCMA’s are vital members of the healthcare team, trained to perform both clinical and administrative tasks, supporting physicians with procedures. These graduates are now equipped with in-demand skills to serve in a variety of settings from primary care clinics to specialty practices—helping expand access to care across our region. Their success highlights the power of partnership in building a stronger, more resilient rural healthcare workforce.





## ***REBOOT Recovery Builds Hope and Healing at Bland and Marion Correctional Centers***

We recently celebrated the completion of the REBOOT Recovery course by a 16-participant cohort at Bland and Marion Correctional Centers. Fourteen have already been released, with the remaining two set to return home this September.

REBOOT Recovery is a faith-based, trauma-informed program that helps individuals heal from the moral and emotional wounds of incarceration, violence, and life disruption. One participant shared that the program gave him “a place to come and talk as one—to see how others feel about what they’ve been through or are facing now.”

Mr. Redd and Mr. Nipper posing with their REBOOT Certificates at the conclusion of their course.



Programs like REBOOT Recovery are helping our returning citizens prepare not just for release but for restoration. This program is made possible by a collaboration with REBOOT Recovery, funded through an ARC INSPIRE grant. For more information on REBOOT Recovery, visit their website: <https://rebootrecovery.com>



## ***May Graduation Ceremonies at Bland and Marion Correctional Facilities***

Celebrating participants in training and recovery programs was made possible through strong regional partnerships. The NRMR Workforce Development Board provides HBI PACT and workforce training through our WORC grant, while reentry services are delivered in partnership with Total Action for Progress through their Pathway Home 5 grant, and recovery programming is offered through Reboot Recovery’s ARC INSPIRE grant. Together, these efforts help individuals prepare for successful reintegration—strengthening families, our workforce, and communities across the region. Each graduate represents a powerful step toward breaking cycles of incarceration and building a stronger, more resilient region.

## ***Billy's Story: Finding His Lane, With Support Every Step of the Way***

Billy grew up in Bland County where he lived with his grandparents and worked a variety of jobs—including factory work and welding—but none felt like the right fit. “I was working, but I didn’t have a clear direction,” Billy said. “I wanted a career that gave me stability, not just another short-term job.”



That journey started to shift when Billy visited Wytheville Community College's Workforce Development office. After hearing about his goals, they connected him to the YouthBuild program through the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board. Even though Billy already had a high school diploma, he qualified under YouthBuild's 25% enrollment rule—and that opened the door to more than he expected. That's where Billy met Crystal, his YouthBuild Navigator, who quickly became more than just a coach. “We connected right away,” Billy shared. “She was always in my corner—checking in, helping me make plans, and keeping me focused.” Billy began by improving his reading skills and building his soft skills, then moved into occupational training where he earned his NCCER Core certification.

Although transportation and mileage costs posed real challenges, he stayed committed. His first major training step was a Power Industry Fundamentals course with a lineman component—but when the day came to climb the pole and hang, Billy knew it wasn't for him. “I tried it, but it just didn't feel right,” he said.

Instead of quitting, Billy and Crystal regrouped. He often talked with her about his love of trucks and working on his own. Crystal listened and helped him pivot into CDL training. Learning to drive big rigs was tough, but Billy had strong support from both his instructors and the YouthBuild team. “The hands-on learning really opened my eyes,” he said. “It gave me a new way to think about my future.”

Throughout the process, Crystal remained a steady presence—helping Billy with his resume, preparing him for interviews, sending job leads, and checking in regularly. After earning his CDL, Billy landed a position with a local concrete company where he's now found both a career and a sense of pride.

When asked what kept him going, Billy didn't hesitate: “Knowing I was learning real skills that could carry me forward—and having someone who actually cared about my success.”

YouthBuild helped Billy do more than access funding. It gave him space to explore, fail, pivot, and ultimately succeed—with the personalized support, encouragement, and flexibility to find his path. “This experience gave me confidence, career options, and a brighter future,” Billy said. “I'm truly grateful for the opportunity—and for the people who walked with me the whole way.”



## ***Claire's Story: From Four Jobs to One Calling***

When we first met Claire, she was juggling four part-time jobs—desperate not just for income, but for a career with purpose. At 24, she and her husband were doing everything they could to keep the bills paid, but Claire longed for stability and a future built on more than survival.



That future began to take shape when Claire was enrolled in the WIOA Youth Program operated by People Incorporated, where her case manager, Sarin, became a pivotal force in her journey. Recognizing Claire's drive and potential, Sarina referred Claire to additional supports, including the YouthBuild and HRSA Healthcare programs operated by the NRMR Workforce Development Board. Throughout it all, Claire's team provided guidance, coordinated resources, and advocated for Claire every step of the way.

With this strong support system behind her, Claire scaled back to one job and committed herself fully to her future. "It was the first time I felt like someone truly believed in me," she said. "YouthBuild wasn't just a program—it was a team standing beside me."

Through YouthBuild, Claire earned her HBI PACT and OSHA certifications, engaged in community Give Back Days, and completed work readiness and foundational skills training that helped her build confidence and direction. Her instructors saw her potential early on. "She came in quiet but focused—once she found her path, she soared," her Board Navigator recalled.

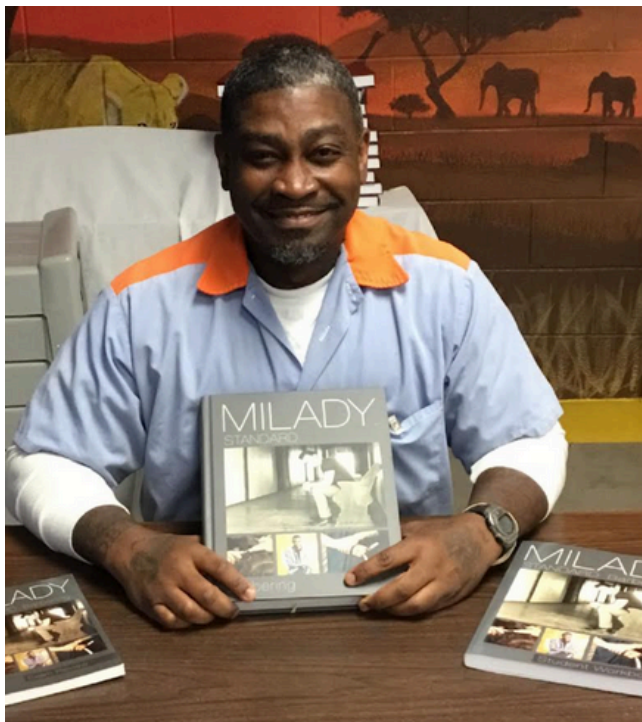
That path led Claire to the Associate Degree in Nursing program at Wytheville Community College in 2023. Balancing full-time studies with part-time work at Twin County Regional Hospital was already a challenge—but when her husband was seriously injured and couldn't work, the pressure mounted. "I was trying to stay in school, care for my family, and make ends meet," Claire remembered. "It was overwhelming."

But she wasn't alone. Thanks to the close collaboration among People Inc.'s WIOA Youth Program, the Workforce Board's YouthBuild and HRSA Rural Health Workforce programs, Claire continued receiving wraparound support through a coordinated, multi-program effort. Even after completing her YouthBuild phase, she remained connected to follow-up services that provided help with transportation, supplies, and ongoing encouragement. Through co-enrollment, she was also directly supported by the HRSA program, which helped cover critical training needs. "That support was everything," Claire said. "It wasn't just financial—it reminded me that people had my back. That I wasn't doing this alone."

On May 10, 2025, Claire graduated as a Registered Nurse and now earns \$34.90 an hour. "I get to walk alongside people during some of the hardest moments of their lives. It feels like exactly where I'm supposed to be," she said. And she's not stopping there—her next goal is to become a Physician Assistant.

From rural roots and multiple part-time jobs to a meaningful career in healthcare, Claire's story is a powerful reminder of what's possible when determination is matched by strategic partnership. She is a testament to what WIOA Youth, YouthBuild, and HRSA programs represent: second chances, deep investment, and a community that walks beside you every step of the way.

## Success Beyond the Metrics: Mr. Johnson's Story



In workforce development, we're often measured by one performance outcome, in particular: employment. But sometimes, success isn't visible on a spreadsheet. It shows up in personal transformation, restored confidence, and the quiet resilience of someone determined to start over. Mr. Johnson's story is one such example.

Mr. Johnson expressed interest in taking our HBI PACT Core Construction course at Bland Correctional Center, but his anticipated release date fell outside the reporting window of our primary grants. At first, we hesitated. But because our Appalachian Regional Commission POWER grant allowed for more flexibility, we were able to enroll him. And after hearing his powerful speech at the May 2024 graduation ceremony, we knew—without a doubt—it was the right decision.

"I've been incarcerated since 1995," Mr. Johnson told the audience, explaining his apprehension about joining a high-tech, construction program that also used virtual reality. "The only technology I had was a Super Nintendo," he joked, "so I didn't want to make a fool of myself." But with a nudge from his nephews and the support of our instructors and Bland correctional staff, he pushed through. "For me, I'm a very hands-on and visual learner," he said. "This platform allowed me to see, identify, and learn how to properly use different tools without actually getting my hands on them... I was really able to fully immerse myself."

What stood out most in his speech was his message to fellow graduates: "Stay ready so you don't have to get ready." He reminded us that workforce training is about being prepared, organized, and equipped for life after incarceration. "There won't be time to figure things out then. Our time to get ready is now."

After the ceremony, Mr. Johnson and I spoke, and he shared a new goal—to become a barber while still incarcerated. We were able to support that dream by providing study materials for his barbering certification coursework. In a handwritten letter I received in June, he updated me on his progress: "I've completed my 'Intro to Computers' course, earned my ServSafe certification, and I'm enrolled in a Business Systems Application class. I'm also studying for my barber certification. It's more challenging than I expected—biology and chemistry are no joke—but I'm making consistent progress."

He closed his letter with a sentiment that speaks volumes about the impact of our work: "As someone who has been incarcerated for three decades, I've reached a point in my life where failure isn't an option. When someone actually shows genuine interest and invests in your growth, the gratitude is immeasurable."

Meeting Mr. Johnson deepened my respect for those who are actively working to change the trajectory of their lives. His determination is a powerful reminder that everyone in our region matters, and when we invest in people—regardless of their past—we all benefit. While his employment outcome may not be reflected in our current performance data, there's no doubt in my mind that Mr. Johnson is on the path to a successful reentry. And I, for one, am incredibly grateful that our paths crossed.



## Reality Check 2025: Where Career Dreams Take Shape



From welding sparks to stethoscopes and squad cars, the Reality Check 2025 Career Exploration Camp delivered an unforgettable, hands-on experience for youth across the region. Held June 2–5 on the Wytheville and Galax campuses of Wytheville Community College, the camp was a dynamic collaboration led by People Incorporated, partnering with Wytheville Community College's Department of Workforce Development, and the NRMW Workforce Development Board—all made possible through the WIOA Youth program.



This wasn't your typical career camp. Over four action-packed days, WIOA and YouthBuild participants rolled up their sleeves and stepped into high-demand fields through immersive activities—framing walls in carpentry, welding steel, exploring healthcare paths from CNA to paramedic, and even operating heavy equipment simulators. They examined crime scenes in forensic science, got behind the wheel in CDL simulations, and met real-life first responders during a live public safety demo.



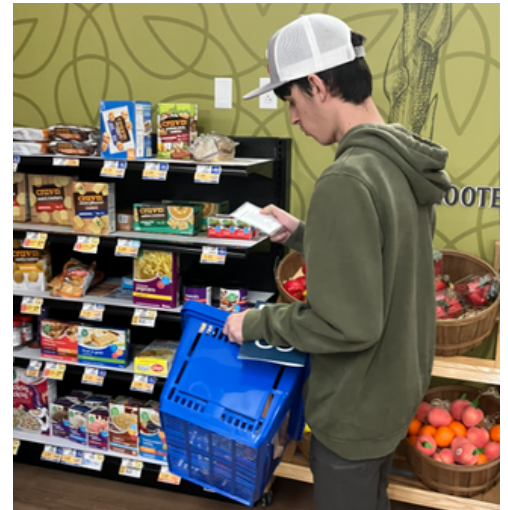
And it wasn't just about trying things out—it was about preparing for what's next. Participants built resumes, practiced interview skills, and gained a deeper understanding of workplace expectations, communication, and professionalism. A hands-on financial literacy simulation drove home the realities of earning and budgeting, helping connect career choices to life goals. Every participant also earned NC3 Hand Tool Safety certification, giving them a nationally recognized credential to kick off their summer job placement.

The week wrapped up with industry tours, including a visit to a local manufacturing facility and the EO Career Commons in Abingdon where students saw firsthand how their new skills can translate into real opportunities.

Reality Check 2025 was a launchpad. For many of our youth, it was their first step into a world of possibility, sparking confidence, curiosity, and a clearer vision of the future.







Want to see the action for yourself? Check out the highlights from Reality Check 2025 in our video recap: [vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/2025youthcareercamp](https://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/2025youthcareercamp)

# Collaboration Corner

Strong partnerships are the heart of regional progress. Here we spotlight the organizations, agencies, and community champions who make our shared impact possible. From workforce training to wraparound services, these partners bring vision, dedication, and innovation to the table, working alongside us to create opportunities, strengthen communities, and transform lives across the region.

## ***Supporting Second Chances in the New River Valley***

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is proud to collaborate with the NRV Reentry Council to support individuals returning to our communities after incarceration. This work is about more than services—it's about restoring dignity, fostering understanding, and recognizing the potential in every person.

As part of this effort, the board is helping coordinate “Returning & Thriving: Overcoming Barriers in the NRV,” a powerful community event that will spotlight personal stories of resilience and highlight the importance of second chances. Designed to bring people together—from service providers to employers to neighbors—this event aims to break down stigma and build up support for returning citizens.

Alongside the event, a series of compelling videos are being produced to share the lived experiences of individuals navigating reentry. These stories offer insight into the challenges faced, the strength it takes to start over, and the transformative impact of community support.

This initiative is part of the board's broader commitment to inclusive workforce development, reducing employment barriers, and ensuring that every individual—regardless of past circumstances—has the opportunity to thrive.



## ***Literacy NRV: Building Skills for the Workplace and Beyond***

*Ginny Ayers, Executive Director, Literacy New River Valley*

In the New River Valley, literacy is more than reading and writing—it's the foundation for opportunity, dignity, and connection. Literacy NRV, a dedicated nonprofit serving all five jurisdictions in our region, is changing lives every day by helping adults gain the essential skills they need to succeed at work, at home, and in the community.

From foundational training in partnership with the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board to *English for Life* classes that empower English language learners to build confidence and communicate in the workplace, Literacy NRV meets people where they are—and helps them go further.

Our *GED to Go* program gives adult learners the flexibility to earn their high school equivalency on their own schedule, while one-to-one Basic Computer Skills tutoring equips them to navigate a world that increasingly depends on technology.

Behind every class, every tutoring session, and every skill gained is a local learner and a caring volunteer proving that literacy changes everything. It's community-powered work, made possible by neighbors who give their time and financial resources, share their talents, and believe in the power of second chances and lifelong learning.

Be a part of something transformative. Volunteer. Donate. Learn more at [www.literacynrv.org](http://www.literacynrv.org).



# A Hospital Is Not a Business – But it is an Employer

Beth O'Connor, Executive Director, Virginia Rural Health Association

What happens if someone goes to the grocery store but doesn't have enough money to pay the bill? They go home without food. What if they need new clothes but can't afford them? They make do with what they have. What about a place to live? A phone? A car? The answer is the same: a business will turn away someone who cannot pay.

But hospitals are different. If that person shows up in a hospital emergency room, federal law requires the patient be treated and stabilized regardless of ability to pay. A hospital is not a business. While this is a concern for all hospitals, it is especially problematic for rural facilities which have a higher percentage of individuals who are uninsured. A hospital with unpaid bills is difficult to operate.

Proposed changes at the national level may soon make the situation worse. Congress is debating major cuts to Medicaid, and those cuts will be felt locally. Medicaid is the backbone of our healthcare system. As Congress debates proposals that would impose drastic cuts and restrictions on the Medicaid program, rural communities stand to lose the most.

The House-passed reconciliation bill would reduce federal Medicaid spending by \$793 billion over the next decade, a 12% cut nationally. In Virginia, Medicaid cuts would cause 19% of the overall population to lose their health insurance. In the New River/Mount Rogers Region an average of 17% would lose their Medicaid coverage, with a region high of 23% in Galax.

The proposed cuts would repeal the coverage people receive through Medicaid Expansion, leaving adults experiencing poverty without health insurance. If those individuals have a medical emergency, the hospital would have to absorb the costs. Imagine how long a grocery store or apartment building or a clothing store would stay open if 17% of the customers did not pay the bill.

Congress has also proposed Medicaid work requirements, a provision to only approve Medicaid to individuals who are working or attending school. Rural residents are more likely to face transportation barriers, seasonal employment, and limited broadband access, making it harder to comply with red tape and easier to lose coverage due to paperwork, not eligibility.

It would be wonderful if everyone in our rural communities had access to a good job with healthcare benefits, which is my second concern about the changes happening at the federal level. The Virginia Rural Health Association (VRHA) was notified that the federal Nursing Workforce Diversity grant opportunity has been cancelled. In collaboration with the NRMR, SWVA, and West Piedmont workforce development boards, 7 community colleges, and 2 universities, we had submitted a proposal designed to uplift local students from historically underrepresented backgrounds, providing them with tools and



## **Hospitals Aren't Stores. Lives Depend on Them.**

*Rural hospitals treat everyone — even those who can't pay. But with Medicaid cuts and lost nursing grants, our communities could lose both care and jobs.*

*Speak up today: [vrha.org/advocacy](https://vrha.org/advocacy)*

*--Beth O'Connor, VRHA*



support to become nurses serving their home communities. The need is urgent. Rural Virginia continues to experience severe nursing shortages, and the workforce pipeline is thinning. Losing this funding opportunity isn't just a setback, it's a missed lifeline. Nursing is a good job and a great option in rural communities with limited employment options. The nursing shortage nationwide is well-documented. This grant would have provided \$2.2 million over three years to train nurses in Southwest and Southside Virginia where the supply of nurses is low and jobs are scarce.

People need jobs to receive health insurance. Hospitals need nurses to provide healthcare. Hospitals are typically one of the top three employers in a rural community. Hospital jobs pay well and contribute to the local economy through taxes and the goods and services hospital employees purchase with their paychecks. The loss of a hospital means a loss of jobs, not just for the hospital employees, but for businesses which served the hospital and employers which counted on the hospital to serve the area. A company looking to expand will pick a community with a hospital over one without.

The convergence of these federal rollbacks—cuts to Medicaid and Medicare, threats to the ACA, the loss of essential training grants, and uncertainty around investments in broadband and behavioral health—threatens to hollow out the systems we depend on. In rural America, where distances are long and resources are scarce, we cannot afford to lose a single provider or clinic.

**Act now! Contact your members of Congress and ask them to support rural communities. We have tools to help you at <https://vrha.org/advocacy>. Use VRHA's Congressional Directory to contact your members of Congress and let them know how many people are covered by Medicaid in your area and what concerns you have if Congress makes severe cuts to Medicaid.**

A hospital is not a business, but it is an employer. Rural Virginia needs both hospitals and jobs. Contact your member of Congress today!

#### **U.S. House of Representatives:**

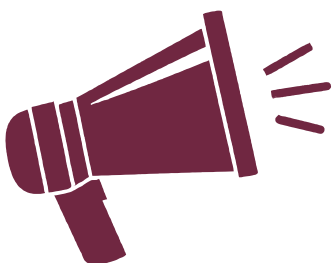
9th Congressional District – Rep. Morgan Griffith  
[morgangriffith.house.gov](http://morgangriffith.house.gov) | (202) 225-3861

6th Congressional District – Rep. Ben Cline  
(Parts of northern Montgomery County)  
[cline.house.gov](http://cline.house.gov) | (202) 225-5431

#### **U.S. Senators for Virginia:**

Senator Mark Warner  
[warner.senate.gov](http://warner.senate.gov) | (202) 224-2023

Senator Tim Kaine  
[kaine.senate.gov](http://kaine.senate.gov) | (202) 224-4024



### **Your Voice Matters**

The most powerful advocates for rural healthcare are the people who live there. Share this newsletter. Talk to a friend. Post on social media. Small actions build big movements.



# Spotlight on Training Opportunities

## Home Builders Institute Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training

The Home Builders Institute's Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training (PACT) is more than just skills training—it's a proven workforce development solution that meets both industry needs and community goals. As a nationally recognized, hands-on program aligned with NAHB-endorsed construction standards, PACT equips participants with real-world experience in high-demand trades like carpentry, electrical, plumbing, and HVAC.

What sets HBI PACT apart is its holistic approach. Participants don't just gain trade skills—they develop essential employability skills, earn industry-recognized credentials, and graduate ready for apprenticeships or immediate employment. The program is highly adaptable to diverse populations, including opportunity youth, adults in reentry, and those overcoming barriers to employment.

Whether you're an employer, training partner, or community leader, HBI PACT offers:

- A reliable talent pipeline with job-ready workers
- Built-in safety and soft skills training, reducing onboarding time
- Opportunities to engage in mentorship, hiring, or co-enrollment
- A meaningful role in economic mobility and community reinvestment

Together, we can meet labor market needs while changing lives. HBI PACT is not just a program, it's a partnership in progress.

## Center for Manufacturing Excellence of SWVA: Advancing Workforce and Industry

The Center for Manufacturing Excellence (CME), co-located with Somic America, Inc. in Wytheville, serves as a regional hub for advanced manufacturing training. Offering programs in areas such as precision machining, industrial maintenance, and robotics, the CME collaborates with local industries, educational institutions, and workforce development agencies to provide hands-on training and certifications aligned with current industry needs.

Under the dual leadership of Stephanie Muncy Surret—Director of Workforce Development at Somic America, Inc. and Executive Director of the Center for Manufacturing Excellence—the CME has become a responsive, forward-looking resource for manufacturers across the region. With a deep understanding of both employer needs and workforce development strategy, Surret emphasizes the Center's role in adapting to evolving industry demands: "The region's manufacturing companies require employees who are highly skilled and able to keep pace with technology. The CME offers the manufacturers a flexible, responsive option for training their incumbent workforce."

The CME plays a pivotal role in strengthening the talent pipeline for one of the region's most vital sectors—manufacturing. By connecting students, transitioning workers, and employers, the Center helps close the skills gap and promotes long-term economic development throughout Southwest Virginia.



**Interested in these programs?**

Call (540) 320-1908 or visit [vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/applications](http://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/applications).

# Business Buzz

## Spotlighting Growth, Challenges, and Connections

From preparing Blue Ridge Job Corps staff for potential workforce transitions, to opening doors for healthcare trainees at Brock Hughes Medical Center, to improving the patient experience at Twin County Regional Healthcare, our work with employers is all about building strong, responsive partnerships. These stories reflect what's possible when business, education, and workforce systems come together to meet real needs—with creativity, compassion, and a shared commitment to the people behind the jobs. Whether navigating change, expanding opportunity, or designing customized training, we're proud to stand alongside our region's employers as they invest in talent, tackle challenges, and grow stronger.

### ***Blue Ridge Job Corps: Supporting Workforce Transitions***

On June 3, we partnered with staff from People Inc. and Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education to host an engaging employability workshop for employees of Blue Ridge Job Corps. The session focused on real-world job readiness—resume development, interview prep, and local job leads. We also joined workforce allies from Virginia Works, Wytheville Community College, and Enroll Virginia for a Rapid Response session, ensuring that Job Corps employees have the support and resources they need should workforce transitions occur. It's part of our ongoing commitment to being ready when people—and employers—need us most.

### ***Brock Hughes Medical Center: From Classroom to Career***

Our partnership with Brock Hughes Medical Center continues to bridge the gap between training and employment. From participating in job fairs and business workshops to serving as a host site for healthcare training work experiences, Brock Hughes has been an outstanding workforce partner. Most recently, a participant in our Trades Gap grant program completed her Certified Clinical Medical Assistant training and applied for a position at the Center. We collaborated with their staff to launch an On-the-Job Training (OJT) project—allowing the Center to hire her with financial support while she gained hands-on experience. It's a win-win: the employer gains talent, and the participant gets a real shot at a long-term career.



### ***Twin County Regional Healthcare: Elevating the Patient Experience***

In conversations with Twin County Regional Healthcare, one priority became clear: the need for professional development for non-clinical, patient-facing staff to enhance the overall patient experience. In response, we teamed up with Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education to design a customized Patient Experience Training curriculum tailored to hospital needs.

With instructional support from MRRAEP and funding from the NRMR Workforce Development Board, the first training cohort launched—and successfully wrapped up—in June. This collaborative solution not only strengthens the hospital's service culture but also invests in the frontline staff who shape patients' first and lasting impressions.



## Supervisor Training: Build Strong Leaders from Within

Our Supervisor Training Series, led by certified trainer Stephanie Surret of the CME, is designed to equip new or emerging supervisors with the foundational skills they need to lead effectively. Through five interactive 90-minute sessions, participants will gain practical strategies they can immediately apply on the job.

Although the current session is nearly full, if you're interested in participating, contact Kimber at (540) 357-1651 to express interest. We're exploring the possibility of a second session!

## SUPERVISORY SKILLS VIRTUAL TRAINING SERIES

*This training is sponsored by the New River/Mt Rogers Workforce Development Board and provided at no cost to participating companies.*

**This training series will focus on helping your employees develop the skills they need to become better supervisors and team leaders.**



**The sessions will include skill-building and practical tips on:**

*Leadership Development \* Effective Listening and Clear Messaging  
Time Management, Task Prioritization and Delegation  
Decision Making and Problem Solving \* Team Building  
Coaching and Providing Feedback*



**Our Trainer:**  
Stephanie Surret,  
Somic America, Inc. &  
Center for Manufacturing  
Excellence

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER:**  
Contact Kimber Simmons at  
[kimber.simmons@nrmrworks.org](mailto:kimber.simmons@nrmrworks.org)  
or 540-357-1651

### Training Information:

- The training series will consist of 5 sessions - 8/5/25, 8/19/25, 9/3/25, 9/16/25 and 9/30/25.
- Each Zoom session is scheduled for 2:00-3:30 pm.
- Space is very limited so participation is capped at 4 per company.

The NR/MR Workforce Development Board is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program.  
Auxiliary Aids and Services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. (540) 633-6764 or TDD-VA Relay: 711  
Link to our funding statement: <https://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/about-us/fundingstatement>



### MAKING RESOURCES WORK FOR YOU

**SEPTEMBER 9, 2025 | 9:00am - 3:30pm**  
**WYTHEVILLE MEETING CENTER**  
333 Community Boulevard, Wytheville, VA 24382

**JOIN US FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO:**

- **CONNECT** with local and regional resources that can assist your business
- **NETWORK** with other business leaders
- **LEARN** about topics such as: Employment Law; Conflict Resolution; Registered Apprenticeships; Stress Management; and more.

**THERE IS NO COST TO ATTEND BUT REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:**  
<https://www.madewythepride.org/business-success-symposium>

HOSTED BY THE BUSINESS SOLUTIONS TEAMS OF THE NEW RIVER | MT ROGERS AREA  
SHRM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CREDITS WILL BE AVAILABLE TO ATTENDEES.  
AUXILIARY AIDS AND SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES. (540) 633-6764 OR TDD-VA RELAY: 711  
LINK TO OUR FUNDING STATEMENT: <https://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com/about-us/fundingstatement>

## Don't Miss the 2025 Workforce Symposium!

Join us for a powerful afternoon of connection, resources, and insight. The Symposium brings together businesses and regional partners to explore tools, programs, and support available to help employers thrive. Engage through networking, interactive booths, and targeted breakout sessions—all designed to meet your workforce needs.



## Rural Workforce Systems: More Than Resilient—They're Essential

Rural workforce systems have done more with less—less infrastructure, broadband, transportation, and funding. Yet we continue to deliver skilled workers, innovative training, and business growth. Not because we're better resourced, but because we're relentlessly resourceful.

But resourcefulness isn't a substitute for real investment. And we're nearing a tipping point.

### ***Opportunity Is Everywhere. Investment Isn't.***

Rural regions face the same pressures as urban ones: shifting skill demands, youth disconnection, digital gaps, and an aging workforce. What we often lack is the sustained investment to meet these challenges at scale.

With the future of key rural workforce programs like the Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) initiative—offered through a collaboration between the Appalachian Regional Commission and the U.S. Department of Labor—still uncertain, the need for stable, long-term investment has never been more urgent. The Trump administration's newly proposed cut to the ARC only deepens that uncertainty, undermining a vital source of support for workforce development in Appalachia. We need consistent support to succeed and scale impactful programs.

Our work is about individual, family, and community transformation. But just as important, it's about reversing labor shortages. Many we serve aren't in the labor force. Helping them gain skills and employment grows our regional workforce. In rural areas, every worker counts. Investing in overlooked talent is economic common sense. Our region is rich in human potential waiting to be developed, empowered, and included. What we need is alignment between rural know-how and the support to deliver at scale.

### ***Flexible Funding, Local Control***

One-size-fits-all solutions don't work when some communities don't even have a bus route or a reliable cell signal. If we want to unlock the full strength of the rural workforce, we need flexible, multi-year funding that empowers local boards to design responsive solutions rooted in community realities. Accountability matters, but not all the outcomes that count can be neatly captured by standard performance metrics. Especially in rural areas, success is often measured in stability regained, barriers overcome, and long-term progress made, not just short-term placements. We also need sustained investment in digital infrastructure to connect learners, jobseekers, and workers to training and telework. We also need greater support for peer-led and community-based programs that reflect the lived experiences of our population, particularly individuals in recovery, those returning from incarceration, and young people facing multigenerational poverty or marginalization. Just as importantly, we need rural leaders at the table to help shape the programs and funding models that emerge from state and federal workforce systems.

### ***Why Rural Investment Pays Off***

Rural regions are not afterthoughts. We're essential to solving national workforce challenges. Investing here strengthens supply chains, stabilizes families, and builds places young people want to stay—not escape.

That's not just workforce development. That's community resilience.

It's time to count rural communities in. We're not waiting to be rescued. We're already doing the work. Just imagine what we could do if resources matched our resolve.



# NEW RIVER/MOUNT ROGERS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

CULTIVATING TALENT FOR THE REGION

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board supports regional economic growth and community prosperity by fostering a collaborative and adaptable workforce system that connects businesses with skilled talent and equips individuals for career success.

## Help Us Support Workforce Development

Share these stories. Stay informed.

Our programs transform lives.

**And your voice matters.**

## Stay Connected.

Visit our website to learn more about our programs and services:



[vcwnewrivermtrogers.com](http://vcwnewrivermtrogers.com)

Follow us on social media for the latest updates and opportunities.



New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board  
NRMR Workforce Network



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New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board



## Questions:

[CareerHelp@nrmrworks.org](mailto:CareerHelp@nrmrworks.org)