

McDowell CHOICES Discussed At Lunch And Learn

By Cathy Patton
 WELCH - A presentation on McDowell CHOICES by Dr. Eloise Elliott and Sean Bulger, WVU College of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences, drew a number of questions during the McDowell Chamber of Commerce monthly Lunch and Learn at the Welch Library Friday afternoon.

goes well that there would be opportunity to attract additional funds.

"We met with key stakeholders in August and they gave us the direction to go in preparing the grant," she said.

The gathering of input from local sources began in January and will continue until May. After that, the grant will be revised with any improvements. Elliott said they would

and to continue to share their ideas. She may be reached at eloise.elliott@mail.wvu.edu. Dr. Bulger may be reached at sean.bulger@mail.wvu.edu.

Dr. Bulger shared that related in-state initiatives provided the framework for the McDowell CHOICES Program and added that three objectives are a part of the planning phase. They include public input, conducting a needs assessment of current environmental health behaviors and revisiting the implementation grant to insure the implementation meets local needs.

A brief question and answer session and focus group meeting followed Elliott and Bulger's presentation and elicited a number of concerns, one of the main ones being what will happen to McDowell CHOICES when the original funding is depleted.

"We're not interested in being here for two years and then going away," Bulger replied.

In closing, Chamber President Delores Johnson announced that a chili bean dinner will be held at Welch City Hall March 7 and that Administrative Assistant Day is slated for April 24 at the Sterling Drive In. For additional information on either of the events, contact Chamber Secretary Betty Jones at 304-436-3833.

Tony Larkin announced that a fun-filled Trivia Night would be held at the Welch Fire Department April 12. More information on the event will be provided later, he said.



EXPLAINING MCDOWELL CHOICES - Pictured are Dr. Eloise Elliott and Dr. Sean Bulger, WVU College of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences. The professors spoke on McDowell CHOICES during the Chamber of Commerce Lunch and Learn at the Welch Library, March 1. (Photo by Cathy Patton)

Funded by the Highmark Foundation, Pittsburgh, MCDOWELL CHOICES, an acronym for Coordinated Health Opportunities Involving Communities, Environments and Schools, is a grant opportunity centered on enhancing physical activity opportunities in both schools and the community.

Dr. Elliott explained that the Highmark Foundation contacted them to assist in developing a project for a southern West Virginia county because fifth graders in our region have the highest obesity rate in the state. Elliott said she chose McDowell County based on need and because McDowell is located adjacent to her Mercer County home.

"We're now getting input from schools and the community. We want to find out the things we need to do to help you. We're here today to get insight," she said, noting that McDowell CHOICES is currently operating under a \$75,000 planning grant that is being used to solicit input for six months. The collected input will then be incorporated into a \$500,000 implementation grant, which will be spread over two years in the amount of \$250,000 per year.

The Highmark Foundation, she said, tentatively approved the \$500,000 grant last October, and said that if all

know by August if the grant is funded.

Elliott encouraged the audience to remain in contact with her and Bulger



FOCUS GROUP - Several members of the advisory board and some of those in attendance at the gathering remained after the Chamber of Commerce Lunch and Learn Friday to participate in a focus group related to the implementation of McDowell CHOICES. Dr. Allgeir Kristjánsson and doctoral candidate Ishonte Allar led the two focus groups. Pictured here (bottom row, l-r) are the Rev. Dee Ann Heptas, United Methodist Church Community Worker; Five Loaves and Two Fishes Food Bank Director Linda McKinney, the Rev. Bobby McKinney, Vesta Larkin; (top row, l-r) Dr. Allgeir Kristjánsson, WVU School of Public Health; Ishonte Allar, WVU doctoral candidate and Libby Vandevander. Tony Larkin is not pictured. (Photo by Cathy Patton)

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Shirley Harris, of Pion Cox, of Hemphill with a winner in the bank's Va

McDowell Public Local Theater

Submitted by: Patrick Corcoran, McDowell Public Library. McDowell Public Charles B. Chapman Library Collection received a novel donation.

When reminiscing Golden Days of 3 County, all the busin diversity of a densely people, the quality of t sometimes overlooked.

Now, due to a joint effort of Martha Ann Phig and Pete Ballard, a glri county's dedication to now safely stored at Public Library in Wel

Who remember "Footlighters", for those do not know, "The Footlighters" were a local acting group performing plays of The Pocahontas. 1000+ seat auditorium thespians were gifted building, to be k "Footlighters Plinkton