



The

Challenge

May 2000



Webster County students shared their stories about long school bus rides at a public hearing last fall. Challenge West Virginia has completed a report on the results of those hearings. The report is posted on our website at <http://www.wvcovenanthouse.org/challengewv/>

Marshall/Hannan project showing positive results

A story in the *April 23 Sunday Gazette-Mail* suggests that after only one year, a small school project at Hannan High School in Mason County is reaping positive results for students and the community.

Reporter Tara Tucker says that “rural, homey little schools like Hannan – the kind West Virginia has been frantically consolidating for the past ten years – actually offer rural kids a better education

than big, consolidated schools, according to mounds of research.”

Marshall University professor Stan Maynard, a believer in small schools, took his university’s resources to Hannan. The school, with 256 students and 23 teachers in grades seven through twelve, became part of a three year experiment about the benefits of small schools.

Please turn to page two

Lincoln County officials fined for ethics violation

The State Ethics Commission has fined and publicly reprimanded three Lincoln County school officials for taking jobs administering a federal grant program after helping obtain the funding for the program.

Superintendent Peggy Adkins, assistant superintendent Charles McCann and Atenville Elementary principal Darlene Dalton have been fined \$500 each for violating the ethics law.

Adkins and Dalton had been part of a team that helped secure a 21st Century grant to fund an after-school and summer program for southern Lincoln County, according to an agreement entered into by the school officials and the Ethics Commission. The grants are awarded only to public school systems.

McCann, as personnel director for Lincoln County schools, was responsible for writing job descriptions and

assisting in hiring for the program.

Dalton and Michael Tierney, who works for the community organization Step by Step, prepared the grant in March 1998 in the name of the Lincoln County Board of Education. Adkins assisted in the preparation.

At the time Adkins was principal of Harts High School, Dalton principal of Atenville Elementary School and McCann was employed as county

personnel director, secondary education supervisor and director of safe and drug free schools.

Adkins, Dalton and Tierney were part of the proposed grant’s management team, along with Ferrellsburg Elementary principal Bill Bryant and Step-by-Step employee Shelley Gaines.

The proposed budget called for a full-time project director, five site

Please turn to page four



Challenge West Virginia

The Challenge is published by Challenge West Virginia, a statewide organization committed to maintaining and improving small community schools and reforming education policy in West Virginia so that all of our state's children have the opportunity to receive a first-class education and the promise of a bright future.

Challenge members believe state education policy, which has resulted in the closing of a fourth of West Virginia's schools during the past ten years, does not serve the best interest of many children, especially those from low-income families who live in rural areas.

Challenge West Virginia is a program of Covenant House, an independent, non-profit organization in Charleston, WV, which is not connected to any other program by the same name.

To start a chapter of Challenge WV, to inquire about the fellowship program or for more information, contact:

Linda Martin 801 Gordon Drive Charleston, WV 25303 304-744-5916 LBM94@aol.com	Beth Spence 58 Frontier Road Alum Creek, WV 25003 304-756-9191 bandb58@aol.com
---	--

<http://www.wvcovenanthouse.org/challengewv/>

Marshall/Hannan project succeeding

With two years to go, Maynard told Tuckwiller he thinks there is clear evidence that colleges and county school boards can band together with parents, teachers and students to turn death-row schools into educational showcases.

Mason County is fortunate to have a board of education committed to small schools and willing to actively support Maynard's efforts at Hannan.

Past schools boards had stripped Hannan High down, yanking away classes and maintenance money, according to Tuckwiller, even while the school was growing. Although the school system enjoyed budget surpluses, Hannan was given trash cans to catch drips from the leaks in the cafeteria roof.

"I observed a drastic removal of programs and classes," said Shirley Gue, elected to the board after years of fighting consolidation. "Multiple years – almost a decade – of what I term severe neglect. I saw the low esteem of students and staff from years of having their neck on the chopping block."

The Marshall team conducted workshops to teach Hannan teachers new technologies and teaching methods. The school board gave Hannan \$20,000 – the same amount it gave the county's two other high schools – to outfit a new science lab.

Parents and teachers donated their time and money to fix up the 60-year-old school. An in-school clinic has been brought to Hannan. Maynard hopes to have a distance learning site at the school by September so Hannan can offer advanced calculus, chemistry and French without hiring more teachers.

This summer Marshall is bringing in "master teachers" from high schools in West Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky to work with the teachers at Hannan.

The university also is starting to work with Guyan

Valley High School in Lincoln County, another small school with an uncertain future.

The Mason County School Board's investment in the project has been limited to the \$20,000 for the science lab.

Gue said the Board never had to pay an initial \$80,000 they agreed to give Marshall. "As soon as we hired them, they started grant-writing," she said. "We ended up spending less on Hannan than on the other schools in the county."

The final proof of Hannan's success is in student achievement. Test scores are up, dropout rates are down and students are attending school regularly. In December, for the first time in a decade, Hannan was awarded full accreditation by the state.

Challenge WV Chapters

Preston County

Jana Freeman
Aurora, WV
304-735-3411

Lincoln County

Thomas Ramey, Jr.
Harts, WV
304-855-3930

McDowell County

Eddie Harman
Caretta, WV
304-875-4202

Ritchie County

Patty Deak
Ellenboro, WV
304-869-3462

Webster County

Cindy Miller
Hacker Valley, WV
304-493-6369

Logan County

Christine Spaulding
Madison Creek, WV
304-752-6056

Harrison County

Paul Hamrick
Clarksburg, WV
304-622-5664

This 'n that from around the state

- Lawyers are attempting to negotiate a settlement in the 26-year-old Recht school funding case, according to *The Charleston Gazette*.

After a brief hearing on April 3, attorney Dan Hedges and lawyers with the state Legislature and the Board of Education began meeting to try to resolve remaining issues in the historic case.

The Gazette reported that among the matters being discussed are school building and school system evaluation issues, together with the state school funding formula and excess levies.

Judge Arthur Recht scheduled hearings for July 31 if the sides can't reach an agreement.

- The State Ethics Commission has launched an investigation into former state school Superintendent Hank Marockie's use of a state-issued telephone calling card. *The Charleston Gazette* reports Marockie made at least 1,700 personal long-distance phone calls on the card during the past four years.

- The *Gazette* also reported that Marockie asked the state Board to let him use annual leave or vacation time to extend his term on the state payroll until June 30, which would allow him to collect about \$3,000 more each year in retirement pay. When that request was not warmly received, Marockie indicated he wanted to raise his retirement pay by \$3,100 a year by applying a year and a half of unused sick leave toward his total years of service. Joe Smith, head of the state's personnel department, said he was unaware of any department head in West Virginia ever having accrued sick leave. "When their salary is set by statute, they're paid 24 hours, seven days a week. They're not docked for a day's absence," said Smith.



- The *Gazette's* editorial page editor was outraged by Marockie's requests. Wrote Dan Radmacher, "A man petty enough to bill the poorest taxpayers in the nation for 268 trips from the state Capitol to downtown Charleston is obviously incapable of feeling shame, especially if doing so might cost him \$3,000 a year. All of the investigations against Marockie should continue. If he is found to have violated the public trust, he should be stripped of his public pension, if possible. Even if he is not found guilty of a crime that would warrant that action, he absolutely should not be granted unusual favors to increase his retirement benefits. The people of this state have been abused enough by this man."

- State Board of Education members say they're in no hurry to hire a permanent schools superintendent. Board members said they are "very comfortable" with David Stewart, who replaced Hank Marockie on March 9 on an interim basis. "It wouldn't surprise me for David Stewart to be superintendent for a while," board member J.D. Morris said. "The superintendent search is on the back burner."

- The Legislative Oversight Committee on Education accountability has urged the state

Board of Education to choose a superintendent.

- School size was cited by some students as a cause of youth violence at a forum sponsored by U.S. Sen. Robert Byrd in April. St. Albans High School sophomore Ben Lukowski said large consolidated high schools are partly to blame for teenagers who feel isolated and outcast. "High schools are too big," Lukowski said. "I mean, 2,000 people. You feel insignificant." Sarah Wilson, a senior at Cabell Midland High, agreed, saying, "Whenever you have schools as big as we are in Cabell County, it's hard for teachers to get to know each student."

- Challenge WV has sponsored public forums for board of education candidates in two counties – Logan and Preston. In Logan County, the *Logan Banner* praised the effort, saying such forums are needed to help revive people's interest in political choice.

- Kanawha and Lincoln County school officials continue to discuss a new high school on Corridor G that would take students from George Washington High School in Kanawha County and Duval High School in Lincoln County, according to *The Charleston Gazette*.

- The Monongalia County Board of Education is considering reopening an elementary school to help alleviate high school overcrowding. Central Elementary would become a supplemental school for ninth graders from Morgantown and University high schools. The board is looking for ways to ease overcrowding following the defeat of an \$80 million bond proposal in February.



Challenge West Virginia

A program of Covenant House, Charleston, WV

Linda Martin
Education Coordinator
801 Gordon Drive
Charleston, WV 25303

Beth Spence
Rural Coordinator
58 Frontier Road
Alum Creek, WV 25003

Non-Profit Organization
US Postage Paid
Permit 2673
Charleston, WV 25301

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Lincoln County officials charged in ethics complaint

coordinators and six activities supervisors. Adkins, Bryant and Dalton intended to volunteer their time as management team leaders, according to the agreement.

After the grant was awarded, Teirney, Adkins and Dalton decided to add three more administrative positions, including an area coordinator to oversee programs at the two elementary schools and one to oversee the Harts High program.

Both Adkins and Dalton expected to be hired for the area coordinator positions unless someone better qualified applied, the agreement stated.

McCann was asked to prepare job postings for all the positions and did so after conversations with Tierney, Adkins and Dalton.

McCann expressed interest to Adkins and Dalton about becoming the project's director. He then prepared a job posting describing the position as an "extra duty assignment," which allowed anyone employed fulltime by the Board of Education to apply.

Tierney by himself made the decision to hire Adkins, Dalton and himself for paid positions. Those three made the rest of the hiring recommendations. As personnel director,

McCann prepared a memo to the superintendent requesting that the hiring recommendations, including his own, be adopted.

McCann was hired at a salary of \$23,000 for 20 hours of work per week; Adkins and Dalton were hired at \$10,000 for ten hours per week.

Adkins resigned from her post and from the management team when she was named superintendent of schools. McCann resigned when he became assistant superintendent of schools.

The Ethics committee concluded that Adkins Dalton and McCann should

have removed themselves from the management team and the hiring process when they decided to seek paid positions.

The three were found to violate that portion of the law which states that "a public employee may not knowingly and intentionally use his or her office or the prestige of his or her office for his or her own private gain or that of another person."

The officials admitted that they "consciously engaged in behavior which resulted in personal gain," but the committee concluded that they did not intend to violate provisions of the law.