



Winter 2007

# The Access Point

News of the West Virginia Access Center for Higher Education, Inc.



## WVACHE Receives Appalachian Power Grant

The WVACHE has received a \$5,000 grant from Appalachian Power, a unit of American Electric Power. The grant will support the WVACHE's efforts to encourage more West Virginia high-school students to go to college.

"We are so appreciative of Appalachian Power's support," said Sarita A. (Gattuso) Rhonemus, WVACHE Executive Director. "The goal of the WVACHE is to change the mindset of our students from, 'I don't know what I'm going to do after high school' to 'I know I am going to college!' When we truly believe in our students we give them hope, especially those who never considered themselves college material. And where there is hope, anything is possible!"

Typical activities of WVACHE Access Projects include field trips to college campuses, business alliances, parent meetings,

college/career fairs, utilization of college exploration software, and teacher visits to schools and businesses. "These activities help students and their parents explore college opportunities and career possibilities while, at the same time, demystifying the college experience as well as building students' confidence and self-esteem," Rhonemus explained.

In fall 2006, after Year 1 of their two-year grants, the 13 current grantees have reported an average college-going rate increase of

57 percent over pre-intervention levels. (See related story on page 3).



*A unit of American Electric Power*

For more information about the WVACHE please contact the office at 304-327-4096 or [sgattuso@bluefieldstate.edu](mailto:sgattuso@bluefieldstate.edu), or visit [www.oache.org/wvache\\_home.htm](http://www.oache.org/wvache_home.htm). ◀

## Share Your Best Practices in College Access!

The WVACHE is compiling a "cookbook" of best practices in college-access programs that will help others replicate the high-impact, low-cost strategies that Access Projects funded by the WVACHE and other Appalachian Higher Education Network centers have created or improved.

To accomplish this task, we need your input! Please visit the WVACHE website ([www.oache.org/wvache\\_home.htm](http://www.oache.org/wvache_home.htm)), download the Best Practices form and fill it out. If you can recommend more than one activity or idea that has proven successful in your

college-access program, please complete a separate form for each one. Don't hesitate to suggest great activities that you think others may nominate; we can consolidate similar activities and credit all contributors!

The WVACHE, in partnership with our sister program in Ohio, will compile all contributions into a comprehensive "cookbook" of successful college-access strategies. This resource will be made available in and beyond the Appalachian region. ◀



### In This Issue...

- 13th Annual Conference . . . . .2
- College-Going Rates Rising . . .3
- Campus Visits . . . . .3
- Mtn. Laurel Art Scholarship Winner . . . . .4

## 13th Annual Conference Draws Record Attendance

A record crowd attended the 13th Annual OACHE/WVACHE Conference October 5–6, 2006 at Zane State College in Zanesville, Ohio.

Approximately 315 individuals attended the two-day conference to share ideas and strategies for encouraging more Appalachian youth and adults to pursue and attain a higher education.

Featured speakers included Appalachian Regional Commission Federal Co-Chair Anne Pope and nationally known motivational speaker Joe Martin.

Other noteworthy speakers included Ohio Governor Bob Taft and U.S. Senator George Voinovich (Ohio).

### Outstanding Educators Recognized

The 2006 Wayne F. White Outstanding Educator of the Year Awards were presented during the Friday closing luncheon. The awards recognize school personnel who have made an extra effort to encourage and assist students to go to college.

**Sara Stankus**, guidance counselor at Buckhannon-Upshur High School, received the award for Wayne F. White Outstanding Counselor of the Year. She was credited with helping to increase the college-going rate by pursuing and implementing the school's WVACHE Access Project.

**Doug Lambert**, superintendent of Pendleton County Schools, was recognized as a Wayne F. White Outstanding Administrator of the Year. Mr. Lambert received praise for his tireless assistance in overcoming potential obstacles to help students participate in such Access Project activities as campus visits and field trips to area businesses.

**Tammy Wells**, principal of Valley High School in Wetzel County, also received an award for Wayne F. White Outstanding Administrator of the Year. Nominated jointly by three Valley High School staff members, Ms. Wells was credited with helping to increase students' standardized test scores above the county and state averages, as well as helping to increase the school's college-going rate.

The following nominees for the Wayne F. White Outstanding Educator Awards also

received honorable mentions:

**Sandy Gallimore**, teacher, Bluefield High School; **Elizabeth Brinkley**, teacher, Montcalm High School; **Sallye Clark**, teacher, George Washington High School; **Judy Goodall**, teacher, Greenbrier East High School; **Candice Blanchard**, guidance counselor, Berkeley Springs High School; **Karen Fish**, guidance counselor, Herbert Hoover High School; **April Haught**, principal, Ritchie County High School; and **Barbara Logue**, assistant principal, Oak Glen High School.

The WVACHE's Outstanding Educator Award was renamed in memory of Wayne White, a founding member of the WVACHE board of directors who passed away unexpectedly in 2004. During his 40-year career in public education, including ten years as executive director of the Ohio program on which the WVACHE is modeled, Mr. White demonstrated, and inspired in others, a commitment to helping students attain a better quality of life through higher education.

Congratulations to all of this year's honorees! Nominations will be accepted this spring for the 2007 Wayne F. White Outstanding Educator Awards. ◀

### Apply for a WVACHE Access Project Grant!

The WVACHE will issue a Request for Proposals for its 2007–09 Access Project grants this spring.

These two-year grants of up to \$10,000 per year (\$6,000 for previously funded schools) are awarded to West Virginia public high schools on a competitive basis to fund a proven model program of activities that encourage students to pursue higher education.

Grant-writing workshops will be offered this spring to explain the WVACHE Access program and how to develop a competitive proposal. Attendance at any of these free workshops is not required in order to apply but is strongly encouraged.

Details on workshop dates and locations will be distributed by mail and posted on the WVACHE Web site. Plan to attend a workshop near you!



Sup't. Doug Lambert accepts a Wayne F. White Outstanding Administrator award from WVACHE Executive Director Sarita A. Rhonemus.

The 13 currently funded WVACHE Access Project grantee schools reported an average college-going rate increase of 57 percent since the beginning of their Access Projects.

As the chart above shows, all but one of the 13 grantees has seen an increase over pre-intervention levels in Year 1 of their two-year grants. More than two-thirds of the grantee schools have increased their college-going rates by 20 percent or more.

“These first-year results demonstrate just how effectively our low-cost, high-impact

college-access model can raise the aspirations of West Virginia students,” said Sarita A. Rhonemus, WVACHE executive director.

College-going rate data, collected and reported by the grantee schools, include students attending two-year as well as four-year institutions of higher education.

The current two-year grant period will conclude in August 2007. Proposals for the WVACHE’s 2007–09 grant cycle will be accepted in spring 2007. ◀

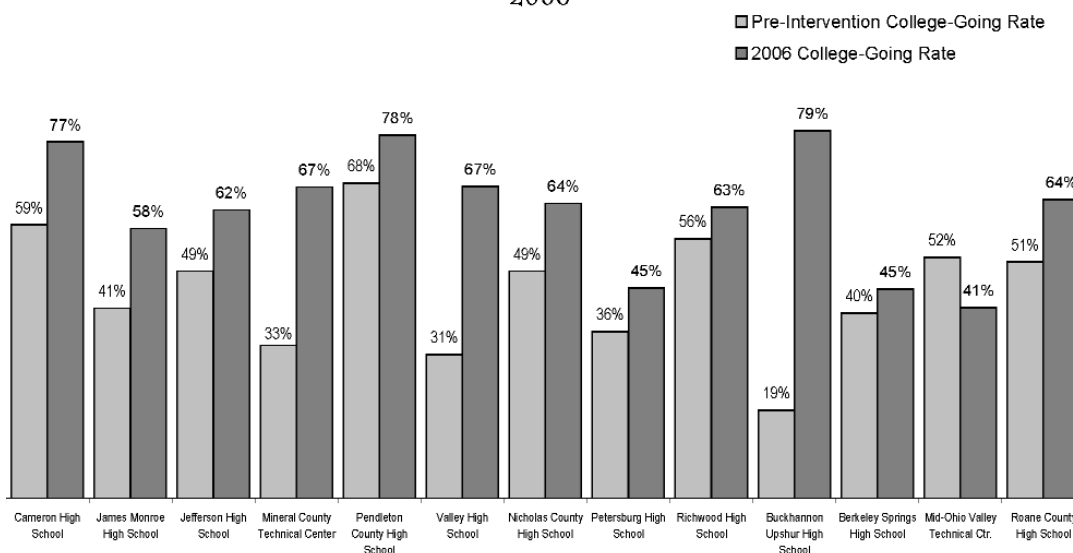
## Same director, new name!

Congratulations to the WVACHE’s executive director on her recent wedding! On October 21 Ms. Sarita Gattuso married Mr. Dan Rhonemus.

Future correspondence and WVACHE information will now use Sarita’s new name, Ms. Sarita A. Rhonemus. You may wish to update your mailing list and email address book to reflect the name change.

Best wishes to the happy newlyweds!

**WVACHE Access Project College-Going Rates 2006**



## Campus Visits: Demystifying the College Experience

The WVACHE funded 79 student field trips to college campuses during the 2005–06 academic year through its Access Project grants.

The 13 currently funded Access Projects, which collectively serve 8,346 students, visited an average of six campuses each during the school year.

Feedback from students and school personnel consistently show that visits to college campuses are among the most effective activities at encouraging students to aspire to and prepare for college.

Students visited a broad spectrum of college campuses, including large four-year public

universities, small private liberal-arts colleges, community colleges and technical institutes. This variety helps students see the wide array of options available in programs, degrees and campus settings.

Even more significantly, campus visits help dispel many students’ self-limiting myths about what college is like and what kind of student constitutes “college material.”

Most of the colleges visited by WVACHE Access Project grantee schools were located in West Virginia, but 30 percent were in the neighboring states of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio and Kentucky. ◀



*The Access Point* is a publication of the West Virginia Access Center for Higher Education, Inc. The WVACHE is funded by donations as well as grants from the Appalachian Regional Commission and Appalachian Power. Donations are tax-exempt and may be eligible for tax credits under the Neighborhood Investment Program through the West Virginia Development Office.

**WVACHE, Inc.**  
c/o Bluefield State College  
219 Rock Street  
Bluefield WV 24701-2198  
**Phone:** 304-327-4096  
**Fax:** 304-327-4427  
**URL:** [www.oache.org/wvache\\_home.htm](http://www.oache.org/wvache_home.htm)

## 2006 Mountain Laurel Art Scholarship Winner Named

Congratulations to Sean Robinette, winner of the 2006 Mountain Laurel Art Scholarship!

A 2006 graduate of Williamson High School in Mingo County, West Virginia, Sean is attending Savannah College of Art and Design, majoring in animation.

“He is a very hard worker and always gives 100%,” said Doug Martin, graphic design and illustration teacher at Mingo Career & Technical Center, in his letter of recommenda-

tion. “I know he will work hard and represent his state in a very positive way.”

The Mountain Laurel Art Scholarship is a \$1,000 scholarship to promote art studies at a two- or four-year college by a student residing in West Virginia or the Appalachian Highlands of Virginia. The scholarship was co-founded by WVACHE advocates Becky Fillinger and Henry Cole. ◀

## Postcards from the Field



WVACHE Executive Director Sarita A. (Gattuso) Rhonemus pins a WVACHE lapel pin to the blazer of Anne Pope, Federal Co-Chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission, during the opening luncheon of the 13th Annual OACHE/WVACHE Conference on October 5, 2006. The conference drew a record attendance of approximately 315 participants. (See related story on page 2.)

### West Virginia Access Center for Higher Education, Inc.

c/o Bluefield State College  
219 Rock Street  
Bluefield WV 24701