NEW RIVER CELEBRATES PURCHASE OF FORMER EXCEL HOMES PROPERTY

[GHENT, W. VA.] New River Community and Technical College has purchased the former Excel Homes manufacturing facility and 23 acres of property in Ghent, W. Va., with a $3.3 million federal grant facilitated through the Office of the Governor. The remainder of the $4 million purchase price was paid from college funds, with the expectation that $600,000 will be returned to the budget through another federal grant secured with assistance from Congressman Nick Joe Rahall.

A start-up grant from the state made it possible for the college to lease the building in mid-2010 and begin retrofitting it to become New River’s Education and Technical Training Center (ETTC), a flexible training facility where a number of innovative workforce training programs are already being offered.

The purchase was formalized at a signing ceremony at the ETTC on Friday, Jan. 14. Participating in the ceremony were Ted D. Spring, president of New River Community and Technical College; First Lady Joanne Tomblin; James Skidmore, chancellor of the West -more-
New River Celebrates Purchase of Excel Homes Property

Virginia Community and Technical College System; Leslie Baker, chair of the New River Board of Governors; John Leslie, owner of Leslie Equipment Company, who sold the property to the college; William Loope, New River’s vice president for institutional advancement and workforce education; and several members of the West Virginia legislature who were instrumental in seeking funding for the project.

The 93,000-square-foot building, which was formally dedicated in October 2010, is now the focal point of a wide range of workforce training programs being offered by New River in partnership with businesses and industries across the region.

“Having a facility of this type is a giant step forward for New River,” stated Spring. “We now have appropriate instructional space to offer the kinds of technical education and workforce training that will change the economic landscape of southeastern West Virginia.”

In cooperation with Case West Virginia and other partners, the center has become a hub for weatherization and green building technology training. In late January, New River will offer line service mechanic training in response to the needs of companies such as Frontier Communications, Appalachian Power, Fibernet, Mas Tec and Suddenlink.

Other programs underway or coming on line soon include Commercial Driver’s License (CDL), heavy equipment operation, welding and pipefitting, HVAC, horticulture and landscaping and GIS and surveying. New River is already well respected throughout the region for its outstanding mine safety training, which is now being offered at the ETTC as well as on the Nicholas County Campus in Summersville.

Following the signing ceremony, business and industry leaders who had been invited to the event were given an opportunity to share their thoughts on additional programs that are needed to assure that West Virginia’s workforce is prepared to fill the needs of employers.

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