

A CO-OP BOOST FOR JOBS AND EDUCATION IN EASTERN KENTUCKY

A cooperative initiative led by East Kentucky Power Cooperative and Project Lead the Way, the nation's leading provider of K-12 STEM educational programs, hopes to transform the future of eastern Kentucky—one teacher and student at a time.

The goal: create a regional work force skilled in science, technology, engineering, and math—i.e. STEM—in order to bring high-skill, high-wage jobs to the region.

Called “STEM-TEK” (STEM Education-Transforming Eastern Kentucky), the project was introduced and singled out as one of the most promising adoptions of STEM programming for regional and economic development in the nation by former President Bill Clinton during the 2015 meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative in June.

The project's three-year plan aims to bring STEM programming to more than 80,000 students in 177 schools across 19 eastern Kentucky counties—the largest rollout of STEM programming in Project Lead the Way's history. Additionally, the program will provide professional development for more than 3,000 eastern Kentucky teachers—allowing them to earn both their master's degrees and National Board Certification thanks to an innovative partnership with Morehead State University.

“Whenever you have a former president speaking on behalf of your project, that provides an incredible opportunity to be introduced to potential sponsors—national corporations and foundations from throughout the country—who are interested in making an impact in education and in America,” says Brad Thomas, associate manager of Economic Development for East Kentucky Power Cooperative.

Thomas and EKPC's Economic Development Manager Rodney Hitch worked in tandem to lay the groundwork and establish relationships with key regional sponsors for the initiative, including Morehead State, SOAR, the Appalachian Regional Commission, Congressmen Hal Rogers and Andy Barr, Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development, and several others.

“East Kentucky Power has really taken a leadership stance with our economic development efforts,” says Hitch. “Our work may not be the usual role that people associate with a power company, but we work closely with the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development and are dedicated to involvement in all aspects of economic development initiatives across the 87 counties our 16 member co-ops serve. We routinely



President Bill Clinton congratulates East Kentucky Power Co-op's CEO Tony Campbell and Project Lead the Way's Vince Bertram, for the joint STEM-TEK education and training proposal at the Clinton Global Initiative America meeting in Denver on June 10. Photo: EKPC

travel around the country and the globe working to recruit business into Kentucky.”

While the Clinton Global Initiative's June announcement detailed STEM-TEK's goals for just its first three years, Hitch is confident that the program will be a decades-long change-agent for the region.

“This is an overall plan to develop the region, from developing our teachers, to our students, to our leadership,” he says. (A later phase of the project plans to provide doctoral training to eastern Kentucky school superintendents, with a concentration on economic and work force development.) “Traditionally there's been a gap between education and work force development,” says Hitch. “But this project brings it all together.”

—Robin Roenker

GOOD EATING ADS

This is one of 159 billboards across the state encouraging families to eat healthy. It's part of the Healthy Choices campaign of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service's Nutrition Education Programs. In addition to the billboards, Extension offices across the state are offering a variety of nutrition programs, including distributing recipe cards and a children's magazine with easy-to-prepare recipes. The campaign also hosts a Facebook page with tons of tips for eating healthy and saving money on food—find it by going to Facebook.com/KYNEP.

They Learn from Watching You.

EAT FRUITS AND VEGGIES AND YOUR KIDS WILL TOO.

SNAP Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
 Making Healthy Food Affordable

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