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Delegates Tour Monongalia County Facilities Helped By State Funds

Posted Friday, November 13, 2009 ; 06:07 PM | [View Comments](#) | [Post Comment](#)
Updated Sunday, November 15, 2009 ; 05:37 PM

The delegates pooled their resources to provide the community grants.

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MORGANTOWN -- Some state lawmakers were in Monongalia County Friday to see the fruits of their labors.

Four of the county's delegates pooled their resources to provide \$250,000 in funding to projects throughout the county.

Delegates Charlene Marshall, Bob Beach, and Barbara Evans-Fleischauer toured two of those projects: the Pace-Training and Education Center's new facility in Mylan Park, and the new facility for the West Virginia Public Theatre.

"When we work together, we can really maximize what we bring home to our district," Evans-Fleischauer said after the tour of Pace-TEC.

Through the tour, delegates met with their grant partners, and watched their funding become the foundation of the new buildings.

"It's usually just a simple one page document and a hand shake," said Delegate Bob Beach. "It's nice to actually come out and see the person who submitted the application and see what they're involved in and see where that money's actually going."

At Pace-TEC, that money is funding job training for disabled people. West Virginia has the highest population of disabled people and the highest unemployment rate in that sector of society. The new facility will provide new opportunities for disabled worker training, like a full-service cafeteria and secure document shredding.

"We could not have done this without support from our local legislative delegation," said Bob Pirner, the development coordinator for Pace-TEC. "They jumped in early and they jumped in generously and without them this never would have happened."

The funds come through Community Participation Project grants. Delegates receive dozens of applications a year, and they have to choose projects, like the new public theater, using careful criteria.

The grants cover four categories: seniors, economic development, public education and emergency medical services.

"We also look at something like this," Delegate Charlene Marshall said while standing the new theatre's upper lobby, "that will provide a number of activities to the entire community and the entire county."

Reaching a consensus lets the delegates provide more funding for those large one-time construction projects.

"We technically run against each other when we run for office, but we have to forget about that and work together because what we're here for is to serve the community," said Evans-Fleischauer.

Other projects included upgraded communications equipment for volunteer fire departments, paying for part of a new pavilion for the Farmer's Market, and assistance for nutrition programs at local senior centers.

Delegate Alex Shook was also part of the legislative team, but he was not on Friday's tour.

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