

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Michael Cornett
Director of Marketing and Public
Relations
The Center for Rural
Development
P: 606-677-6155
mcornett@centertech.com



2292 South Highway 27, Suite 300
Somerset, Kentucky 42501
Telephone: (606) 677-6000
Facsimile: (606) 677-6010
Web Site: www.centertech.com



First Lady Jane Beshear visits educators, parents at Reading Recovery event hosted by Forward in the Fifth, The Center for Rural Development

Kentucky First Lady Jane Beshear met this week in Somerset with educators and parents from seven Southern and Eastern Kentucky counties—including Harlan County—to discuss ongoing efforts to improve reading skills in young children.

Mrs. Beshear, a strong advocate for education and former high school teacher, attended a book-reading demonstration by a first-grade participant in the Reading Recovery program, followed by a roundtable discussion on how the reading program is changing the lives of struggling young readers across the region.

The event, hosted at The Center for Rural



Development by Forward in the Fifth in partnership with the Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative, was held Thursday, March 8, as part of a series of special statewide activities planned in observance of the second annual Kentucky Literacy Celebration Week.

“Our Commonwealth has made great strides in recent years, being the only state to show significant statistical improvement among fourth- and eighth-grade readers in both the 2007 and 2009 National Assessment for Education,” Mrs. Beshear said. “However, we still have a long way to go to increase literacy at all levels and must work on both state and local levels to promote literacy not only as an education tool, but to stay competitive in the 21st Century.”

During the program, Patricia Burgan of Harlan shared with the First Lady some of their success stories and personal experiences in working with Reading Recovery. The program is a school-based, short-term intervention designed for 5-6 year olds who have difficulty with reading and writing.

“The impact that you make in a child’s life is an impact that will last a lifetime,” said Burgan. “Reading Recovery is a way to impact a child’s life by fostering success in reading.”

Many of the participants talked about the social and academic changes they have seen in their students as a result of the program. Elijah Davidson, a first-grade student at Hopkins Elementary School, proved that point by demonstrating his reading skills for the entire group.

Davidson, who was accompanied by his mother and his Reading Recovery teacher, read from the children’s book, “Ratty-Tatty,” a story about a rat who was too clever for anyone to catch.

“I cannot say enough good things about this program,” said Elijah’s mother, Christina Devlin. “Elijah has improved so much since he started working with Mrs. Wilson in the Reading Recovery program. It is a truly amazing program.”

The program at The Center was in continuation with Mrs. Beshear’s ongoing work with Forward in the Fifth to help advance education in the region and throughout the state. Forward in the Fifth, a nonprofit organization and affiliate of The Center, serves a 42-county primary service area in Southern and Eastern Kentucky and beyond.

Mrs. Beshear was in Somerset last fall to attend Pulaski County Literary Day, where nearly 1,000 fourth-grade students in Pulaski County were each presented a complimentary book by Somerset businessman and education supporter Chuck Coldiron, and participated in a regional dropout prevention summit hosted by Forward in the Fifth in 2010.

“Literacy is so critical to our daily lives,” said Forward in the Fifth Executive Director Jim Tackett. “These skill sets were at the heart of our mission more than 25 years ago when Forward in the Fifth was created and still rings true today.”

Forward in the Fifth was created in 1986 by U.S. Congressman Harold “Hal” Rogers (KY-05) and other leaders to work to reverse low educational attainment levels in the Fifth Congressional District.

“Those who can read and effectively communicate have a limitless potential that will never be surpassed,” Tackett said.

The Kentucky Literacy Celebration was created by the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development (CCLD) and First Lady Jane Beshear. Established by legislation in 1998, the CCLD’s mission is to promote literacy and address the diverse needs of all learners through professional development for Kentucky educators and research that informs policy and practice.

Forward in the Fifth, a non-profit organization and an affiliate of The Center for Rural Development, was formed in 1986 by U.S. Congressman Harold “Hal” Rogers (KY-05) and other leaders to work to reverse low educational attainment levels in the Fifth Congressional District. The organization strives to engage community stakeholders to advance the value of education; serves as advocates to advance all education systems to improve educational attainment; and supports schools and stakeholders to secure needed resources to improve the quality of education within their local communities.

-30-

PHOTO CAPTION 1: Educators and parents from seven Southern and Eastern Kentucky counties met with Kentucky First Lady Jane Beshear on Thursday, March 8, at The Center for Rural Development in Somerset to collaborate on the importance of improving reading skills in young children. Meeting with First Lady Jane Beshear, front row, second from left, are Keith Lyons, coordinator of communications, marketing, and promotions for Collaborative Center for Literacy Development; Jim Tackett, executive director of Forward in the Fifth; and Vickie Slone, Hazard; second row, from left, Debbie Goble and Jennifer Sheens of Prestonsburg; third row, from left, Danna Duff, Hazard; Eunice Waddles and Alisa Huff of Hindman; Patricia Burgan, Harlan; and Donna Singleton of Hazard; and back row, from left, Mindy Ketcham, Tonya Halcomb, and Carla Hinkle of Barbourville; Charlene Horn, Prestonsburg; and Pam Miller and Susan Lacey of Campton. Mrs. Beshear was presented a framed print of different photographs of Reading Recovery students throughout the region. The meeting with the First Lady was hosted by Forward in the Fifth in partnership with the Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative.