

# Region VII adds more tech to office at business center

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The Region VII Planning and Development Council enjoyed its first meeting in the renovated office areas located at the Upshur Business Center on Monday.

The renovations included expanding the conference room on the second floor by knocking down a wall and adding more technology, according to executive director Rosemary

Wagner. The conference room now features a Smartboard.

"We hope to add web conferencing," Wagner said.

The space will be available not only for Region VII's quarterly meetings but for community as well.

West Virginia Wesleyan's SIFE team who recently won the regional SIFE championship

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and will compete nationally in May gave council members a brief portion of their 24-minute winning presentation.

Region VII was one of the sponsors with the first Go Green Convention and helped SIFE find funding for the event.

Nearly \$18,000 in grants and sponsorships was raised, according to the presentation. At the February 23 event, nearly 50 vendors and over 600 people attended the convention.

Wesleyan SIFE Advisor Dr. Scott Bellamy noted the event took not only the hard work of the students but also the support of the community.

The convention was one of 15 projects the Wesleyan SIFE team did this year.

Dale Hawkins, chair of the Collaborative for the 21st Century Appalachia, said he had been researching for the Benedum Foundation.

In 2009, West Virginia will import 98 percent of its food.

"That's an economic hemorrhage for the state," he said.

Hawkins who is also leading another initiative — the New Appalachian Farm and Research Center, said the center recently got its non-profit status.

The focus is to help agricultural communities beginning with Upshur County and extending to the Mountain Lakes region within the next two to three years (this will include most of Region VII's counties).

Hawkins said there are several ways the center is working on getting its products out.

The first is CSAs or Community Supported Agriculture shares in which people can buy into the farm and receive fresh produce each week of the season. The CSA sold out for spring with 65 people.

Hawkins said they could have taken 200 or 300 more but "I wanted to get it right."

The second way is by direct market such as the local farmer's market. The wholesale and retail markets are the remaining ways to get the product out.

Hawkins said one issue with trying to get restaurants to use more locally grown products is that they need large quantities.

At Stonewall Resort where Hawkins is executive chef, the annual food budget is between \$1 and 1 1/2 million. Last year, the resort spent \$300,000 locally.

Mike Masterman, CEO of Extreme Endeavors, spoke about a new project — MetaVerde Technology — and the need for renewable forms of energy. Masterman said that generators don't work in natural disasters. The generators only lasted a day during Hurricane Katrina due to fuel shortages. Masterman discussed ideas to generate hydrogen and crosscutting technologies that could benefit companies and everyday consumers.

Region VII also approved an economic resolution that states in part, local government and economic leaders of the region do "hereby urge the funds be appropriated for the approximately 75 miles of Corridor H left to be completed thus promoting both a commercial stimulus and construction package for North Central West Virginia and surrounding counties."

Region VII is made up of Upshur, Barbour, Braxton, Gilmer, Lewis, Randolph and Tucker counties.

Region VII Planning and Development Council will hold its annual meeting tentatively scheduled for June 22. The time and location will be announced at a future date.