



Past. Present. Futures.

A Program of the College of Education and Professional Development

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



As we commemorate the 25th anniversary of the June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development, we are filled with immense pride and gratitude. This milestone stands as a testament to the dedication, passion, and hard work of our entire team over the years—educators, researchers, board members, students, and supporters alike.

Over the past quarter-century, the June Harless Center has been at the forefront of advancing educational opportunities and outcomes for rural communities. Our mission has always been to bridge gaps, foster innovation, and empower educators to provide the highest quality education to every student, regardless of their geographic location.

Reflecting on our journey, we have achieved remarkable milestones. From pioneering research initiatives to implementing transformative educational programs, our

impact has been profound and far-reaching. We have built strong partnerships with schools, county districts, universities, foundations, and organizations, all united by a common goal: to uplift and support rural education.

As we look to the future, our commitment to excellence remains unwavering. We will continue to explore new frontiers in educational research, embrace cutting-edge technologies, and develop innovative strategies to address the unique challenges faced by rural communities. Our vision is to create an inclusive and equitable educational landscape where every student can thrive and succeed.

Our future goals are ambitious and inspiring. We aim to leverage partnerships to enhance June Harless Center programs and research opportunities, connecting with higher education programs throughout West Virginia to support preservice educators and recruit future educators. We are dedicated to elevating the teaching profession and supporting West Virginia districts as they strive to improve student outcomes.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to each one of you who has been part of this incredible journey. Your support, collaboration, and belief in our mission have been the driving force behind our success. Together, we have made a difference, and together, we will continue to shape the future of rural education.

Here's to the next 25 years of innovation, growth, and positive impact!

Dr. Tarabeth Heineman
Executive Director, June Harless Center

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3. Director's Message
- 6. The Legacy of Buck Harless
- 8. Founding Director's Message
- 10. Milestones in Uplifting Rural Education
- 12. Pillars of the June Harless Center
- 17. Harless Center in Action
- 24. Future Projects
- 25. Hallie Harless Distinguished Teacher Award
- 26. Harless Hall of Fame Inductees
- 28. Current & Former Staff
- 30. Partners

“”

I've learned that we must never give up our desire and willingness to try to make things better, and we must always hold ourselves and others to higher standards. We should never allow any school system to give its students less than the very best education it can.

BUCK HARLESS

The Bridge Builder

Will Allen Dromgoole

An old man, going a lone highway,
Came at the evening cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast and deep and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim-
That sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned, when he reached the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,
"You are wasting strength in building here.
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way.
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide,
Why build you the bridge at the eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head.
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him."



THERE FOLLOWETH AFTER ME

The Legacy of Buck Harless

The true measure of a legacy is not found in titles, headlines, or the buildings and institutions that bear one's name, but in the lives forever changed by one person's generosity and vision. James H. "Buck" Harless leaves behind such a legacy—one defined by the bridges he created to enable others to step into the futures of their dreams.

In *A Most Fortunate Life*, Buck urged young people to "take the mantle of leadership and work to make life better for their generation and generations to come." These words were not merely hopeful advice. They reflect the path he traveled and the steps he took to make the way easier for others. He committed himself to providing opportunities that helped people rise, grow, and realize their maximum potential.

Buck's legacy is woven into the ongoing story of West Virginia, serving as a living reminder of how one person's commitment to building bridges for others can echo for generations. He made a positive difference in the lives of countless individuals and families—not only through employment at his business ventures, but also his steadfast commitment to helping others thrive. He used his wealth, influence, and compassion to help people move from where they were to where they could be, creating pathways for them to realize their best selves.

His generosity was not driven by ego, but marked by quiet, faithful efforts to lift others up. Buck's dedication to his community is reflected in the institutions and initiatives he championed to improve the lives of his fellow West Virginians. Whether through the creation of the Larry Joe Harless Community Center—providing wellness and recreational opportunities for families in his hometown of Gilbert—or his efforts to expand healthcare access in rural areas, his giving was always guided by the desire to build a stronger future.

At the heart of Buck's philanthropy was an unwavering belief in education's power to transform lives. He understood that the economic gap in West Virginia could best be narrowed by opening doors for students, families, and educators. From establishing numerous scholarships, funding professorships across the state, and launching programs designed to expand access to quality education, his support was far more than financial gifts; it was an investment in possibility. The June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development at Marshall University, named in honor of his late wife, stands today as a lasting testament to their shared commitment to empowering the next generation of learners and educators.

"A good education gives a child the tools to succeed. Having the necessary tools can solve so many problems, like overcoming poverty."

Today, his stewardship continues to carry others forward. His indelible mark is seen in the students who pursue their dreams, the educators who are enabled to inspire and uplift them, and the communities that continue to thrive because of his contributions. Buck's life teaches us that the greatest legacies are not built by deeds done for personal acclaim—but by improving the path for those that follow.

FOUNDING DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dr. Stan Maynard, Professor Emeritus, Marshall University

As I reflect on the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the June Harless Center, I am reminded of the familiar quote from Margaret Mead, renowned anthropologist, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." That could be the mantra of the Harless Center.

What started with a conversation between Buck Harless, a successful entrepreneur and philanthropist from Mingo County, and me in his office in 2000, culminated in the vision of the Harless Center. Buck shared a story with me about following a school bus and watching two little boys returning home from school. The first boy left the bus and approached his home: a well-kept lawn; beautiful brick home; a mother on the front porch waiting for him with a hug and loving smile. The second boy left the bus and approached his home: a yard in disarray, an unkept house, and no one waiting on the porch. Buck Harless saw the tragedy of this scene. He wanted to provide options for both young boys that provided equitable opportunities for them to become all that they were created to become. I shared his concern and had always envisioned an educational system that would result in all children being prepared for a successful and rewarding life, able to face any challenges they confront with confidence, hope and faith regardless of who waits on the porch.



The first step was to assemble a team of passionate educators motivated to do everything necessary to provide a sound foundation of world class knowledge, college/career skills and tools for a balanced and successful life together with a feeling of acceptance and worth for the children of West Virginia. Mr. Harless provided the necessary funds to initiate the establishment of the Center. What began with a staff of two has grown into a staff of eighteen as of this publication.

I am extremely proud of the educators who have taken the reins of the Harless Center and taken it to new heights through creative and productive programming. Lives of thousands of children and those who strive to provide them with a superior education and a successful future have been touched by the Harless Center staff members. I pray that the Center continues for many years to come, so that the children of West Virginia will have the educational skills and confidence to capture the endless opportunities to flourish.



MILESTONES IN UPLIFTING RURAL EDUCATION

2000

Establishment of the June Harless Center (JHC) for Rural Educational Research and Development as a result of a gift from Buck Harless in memory of his late wife, June

2001

JHC Demonstration Site opens in Wayne County to focus on best practices for K-1 reading

2002

First Harless Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony honoring Dr. Bernard Queen, Mr. Buck Harless, and Dr. Jane McKee

2007

New pilot K-5 model wing opened at Kellogg Elementary in Wayne County

2008

Shewey Science Academy established and funded by Fred C. Shewey and sustained by his sons, Bill and Robert

2009

Appalachian Math/Science Partnership funds project with five counties to provide extensive science professional learning to teachers and administrators

2013

Transforming Transitions grant partnership with Cabell County Schools funded by the Benedum Foundation focusing on pre-k to kindergarten transitions

2014

MU Early Education STEAM Center expands to satellite location as the JHC partners with Cabell County Schools to create a school that follows the EL Education model

2015

WVDE and JHC partner to create the West Virginia Leaders of Literacy campaign for grade level reading

2019

JHC assumes the management of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library for the state of West Virginia

2020

JHC is awarded \$250,000 from the Benedum Foundation to assist teachers as they support student learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

2021

Fellowship program launches in Fayette and Summers counties, focusing on mathematics instruction for elementary educators
JHC named WVDE Early Learning Technical Assistance Center

2003

Verizon gifts \$100,000 to continue the expansion of distance learning education targeted in McDowell and Mingo counties

2005

JHC staff travels to the Dominican Republic to provide rural educational outreach

2006

JHC and WVDE collaborate to host the first Reading Higher Education Symposium

2010

JHC takes over the management of the MU Early Education Center on MU's Huntington campus, renaming the pre-k site the "MU Early Education STEAM Center"

2011

Partnership with the CREATE Lab at Carnegie Mellon University establishes the June Harless CREATE Satellite

2012

Collaborative grant between Cabell County and MU Early Education STEAM Center funds a study abroad experience to Reggio Emilia, Italy

2016

Annual statewide campaign for grade level reading conference is established

2017

MU Early Education STEAM Center partners with Logan County schools to create a pilot pre-K classroom at Chapmanville Elementary

2018

Marshall University Early Education STEAM Center at Explorer Academy is recognized as the first NAEYC accredited pre-K site in a public school building in West Virginia

2022

The JHC and WVDE hosted singer-songwriter, actress, and early childhood literacy advocate Dolly Parton to celebrate the successful statewide implementation of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library at the Clay Center in Charleston, WV

2023

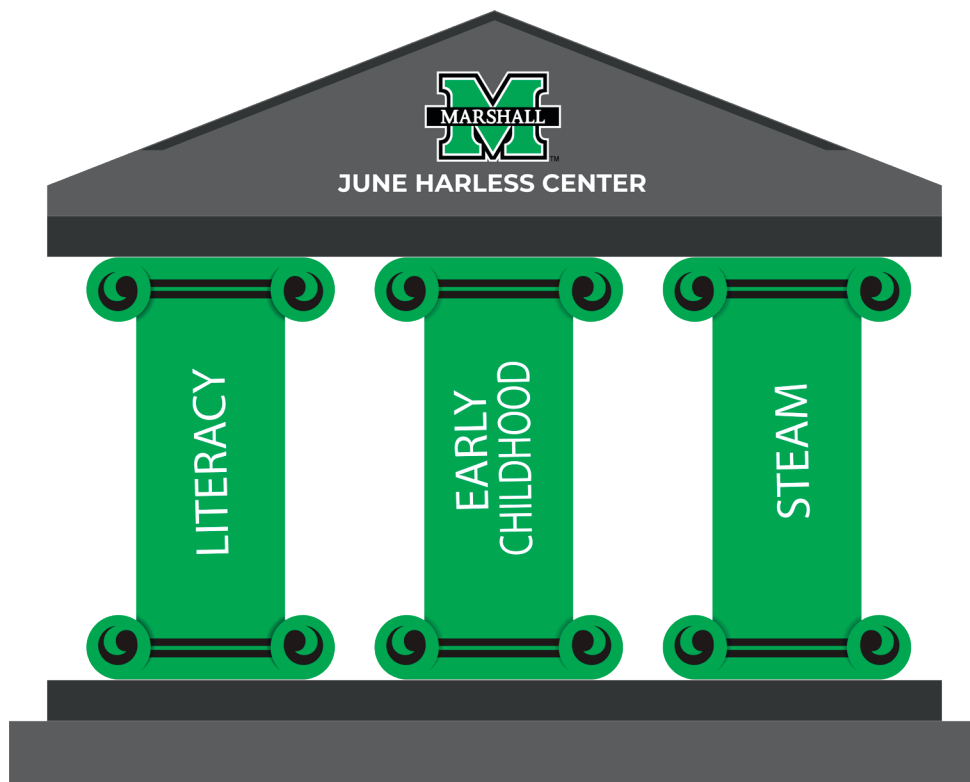
The JHC is granted extra space in Corbly Hall at Marshall University and expands the Marshall University Early Education STEAM center to include a classroom for children ages 2-3

2024

JHC receives a \$50,000 Sparking Early Literacy Growth Grant from the WVPEC and Benedum Foundation to design intentional play-based literacy interventions in pre-k and kindergarten classrooms.

PILLARS OF THE JUNE HARLESS CENTER

The work of the June Harless Center has evolved drastically over the past 25 years. While some specific programs have ceased to make way for newer innovations, all of the past and future work is upheld by the same foundation. Excellence in literacy, early childhood, and STEAM education are the three pillars that guide the work of the Center. The following projects are keystones of our work that are widely associated with the Harless Center brand.





LITERACY

Literacy has been a cornerstone of the June Harless Center's work since its inception. Just one year into program development, the Center partnered with Wayne County Schools to transform the vacant Westmoreland Middle School into the June Harless Center Demonstration Site—a K–2 school designed to showcase best practices in early literacy instruction. The site featured classrooms equipped with cameras and virtual capabilities, allowing teachers across West Virginia to observe high-quality instruction via videoconferencing or on-site visits. Building on this momentum, Marshall University later announced the establishment of the June Harless Center for Reading Excellence, which provided training for Marshall faculty, students, and educators throughout the region. To further support literacy instruction, the Center also launched a master's-level literacy program to help teachers across the state earn a graduate degree.

What began as a cornerstone has become a foundation for innovation—supporting educators today while helping shape the future of literacy instruction across West Virginia and beyond.

PILLARS OF THE JUNE HARLESS CENTER

STEAM



The Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) Team at the Harless Center supports PK–12 educators through professional learning opportunities rooted in problem-based learning and design thinking. Our workshops expand educators' capabilities to enhance STEAM content knowledge and inspire their students to become the problem finders and solvers of tomorrow.

We work closely with schools and districts to design customized professional learning experiences that integrate research-based STEAM practices. Through hands-on, inquiry-driven learning, students explore phenomena, connect new and existing knowledge, build and use models, evaluate and communicate information, and design real-world solutions—skills that extend across disciplines and throughout life.

Educators gain practical training in coding, drones, and robotics,

supported by our Lending Library, while specialized programs like the Elementary and Middle School Math Fellowships and Reading Like a Scientist strengthen math and literacy connections. We also champion outdoor education, helping teachers extend learning beyond the classroom and into the natural world.

While inspiring students to explore futures in science and engineering is a core facet of our work, our broader goal is to empower teachers to equip students with skills that extend far beyond the classroom. By helping teachers cultivate essential skills—problem-solving, critical and creative thinking, communication, and adaptability—we prepare students to navigate an ever-evolving world with confidence and curiosity. Expanding access to high-quality STEAM education ensures we are shaping the next generation of critical thinkers, problem solvers, and innovators.

PILLARS OF THE JUNE HARLESS CENTER

EARLY CHILDHOOD

“The STEAM Center has a been a wonderful addition to our village. Ella has become so enthusiastic and confident when exploring new concepts. She exhibits an exciting level of curiosity about the world around her. She thrives in the empowering environment they provide at the STEAM Center. We are so pleased to have her in a space that promotes independence in capable young minds while providing emotional connection. In the words of Ella Quinn (age 2), “I learn experiments at school!””

– Drs. Dakota and Carrie May

The Marshall University Early Education STEAM Center first opened its doors in 2010 with one classroom on Marshall University’s campus. In 2014, the center expanded by adding another pre-k classroom at Explorer Academy in Huntington, WV in partnership with Cabell County Schools. In 2018, both locations were affirmed as nationally accredited early childhood centers by NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children), making Explorer Academy the very first nationally accredited Pre-K classroom in a West Virginia public school building. In 2023, we expanded to open a classroom for toddler-aged children on Marshall University’s campus. In addition to offering Reggio-inspired, play-based experiences to our youngest learners, our program continues to provide high-quality professional learning for in-service and pre-service teachers in West Virginia.



SHEWEY SCIENCE ACADEMY

In 2008, Mr. C. Fred Shewey, a native of Kermit, WV, provided a grant to the June Harless Center to enhance science education in Mingo County. The philanthropy of Fred and Christine Shewey laid the foundation for the Shewey Science Academy. This summer program engages middle school students in hands-on Science and STEAM experiences while building teacher capacity and inspiring a vision for future majors and careers in science and technology.

Each summer, students participate in inquiry-based investigations developed by June Harless Center staff and led by Mingo County educators. To support local teachers, the June Harless Center provides pre-academy training, equipping them with innovative instructional strategies for the camp and their classrooms.

Academy themes have included forensic science, where students analyze DNA, fingerprints, and bite marks to solve fictional crimes, as well as engineering challenges using LEGO robotics and GPS/GIS mapping. NASA e-missions have immersed students in space rescue scenarios, while environmental investigations have focused on water quality and sustainability.

After COVID disruptions, the 2024 academy returned with a focus on Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) technology, aligning with an ongoing Mingo County economic initiative. Students participated in a “flight school” to learn drone physics and piloting skills before tackling real-world missions such as search-and-rescue operations and infrastructure inspections. Career exploration was integrated throughout, exposing students to UAS applications in fields like disaster response and environmental monitoring. This year’s academy will expand to include drone programming and autonomous flight.

Through the sustained generosity of the Fred and Christine Shewey family and continued support from the June Harless Center, the Shewey Science Academy remains a vital program for inspiring students and strengthening STEAM education in Mingo County, ensuring that Fred Shewey’s vision for opportunity and innovation continues for future generations.

DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

Since 2006, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) has provided West Virginia children, from birth to age five, with high-quality home libraries promoting early literacy, school readiness, long-term academic achievement, and family engagement. West Virginia is one of only 20 states offering statewide availability to this transformative program. Currently, 56% of eligible age WV children are enrolled.

In partnership with the Dollywood Foundation, the June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development at Marshall University manages DPIL across the state, coordinating funding partners and ensuring that all enrolled children receive monthly book deliveries. Each child, at a cost of \$31.00 per year, will graduate the program at age five with a 60-volume personal collection of books professionally selected by literacy specialists to advance early learning and set children up for a lifetime of success.

DPIL's mission is to provide every child in West Virginia access to developmentally appropriate literary materials, leveling the educational playing field and paving the way for long-term achievement. Research shows DPIL graduates outperform their peers in 3rd-grade academic tests and exhibit higher high school graduation rates. These outcomes positively impact workforce readiness, economic growth, and even substance use prevention.

The program's success relies on partnerships and funding from sources such as the West Virginia State Legislature, which contributed half of the FY25 funding. Additional support is necessary from county partnerships, corporate sponsorships, grants, private donors, and fundraisers like the June Harless Center's annual Dolly Dash 5K Race for Reading.

Together, we're building a brighter future for West Virginia's youngest learners.

STEAMPOSIUM

STEAMPOSIUM began in the summer of 2018 as an early childhood education conference hosted by the June Harless Center at Explorer Academy in Huntington, West Virginia. Sponsored by the Benedum Foundation, the inaugural event brought together educators from across the state—including Logan, Monongalia, Cabell, Lincoln, and Harrison Counties—for hands-on learning focused on integrating science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics (STEAM) through Reggio-inspired practices. Participants engaged in Morning Gatherings, immersive workshops, and reflective conversations around purposeful play, project work, early numeracy and literacy, and the use of natural materials and real-world experiences. Dr. Joy Saab, professor emerita at West Virginia University, served as the keynote speaker.

Since then, STEAMPOSIUM has evolved into a dynamic, statewide professional learning experience through the collaboration of the June Harless Center, the STEAM Technical Assistance Center (STEAM TAC) at the West

Virginia Public Education Collaborative, and the West Virginia Department of Education's Office of Student Enrichment. What began as a conference for PK–1 educators has grown to support PK–12 educators through rich, hands-on approaches to STEAM integration.

In July 2023, nearly 200 West Virginia educators gathered at Stonewall Resort in Roanoke for the third annual STEAMPOSIUM—marking the first year the conference expanded to serve PK–12 educators statewide. This enhanced professional learning experience offered personalized workshops, grade-level sessions, and opportunities to collaborate around innovative STEAM practices. In 2024, another 200 educators from across the state participated, continuing the momentum of statewide collaboration and growth.

STEAMPOSIUM exemplifies what's possible when strong partners unite to support West Virginia educators in delivering inspiring, hands-on learning experiences that prepare students for their futures.

STEAM POWERED ENRICHMENT

While the June Harless Center's STEAM team is primarily focused on building teacher capacity through high quality, immersive professional learning, we also design and deliver hands-on enrichment experiences that spark curiosity, build confidence, and bring learning to life for students across West Virginia. These opportunities encourage creativity, problem-solving, and real-world application of STEAM concepts in engaging, supportive environments.

Throughout the '24-'25 school year, our team has partnered with the Huntington Children's Museum and Central City Elementary School to create integrated literacy and science experiences aligned with the museum's themes. Each month, students in grades Pre-K to 3 walk from their school to the museum, where they participate in an activity led by Harless Center staff before exploring the exhibits. Students have investigated dinosaur anatomy, fossil formation, deep-sea organism adaptations, and even experimented with rocket flight while connecting it to the legacy of Katherine Johnson. These activities blend reading, hands-on science, and design challenges that make learning both meaningful and memorable.

Our collaboration with the Huntington Children's Museum continues into the summer with the Cardboard Boat Regatta, hosted

annually at Marshall University's Frederick A. Fitch Natatorium as part of the museum's KidsFest celebration. Students in grades 3–12 kick off their break with a STEAM-y summer challenge to design and build boats out of cardboard and duct tape capable of carrying them across the pool. With guidance from the Putnam Area Robotics Team and Harless Center staff, participants explore the Engineering Design Process and put their creativity, perseverance, and teamwork to the test.

In the fall, the Harless Center coordinates the Pumpkin Drop, a high-flying engineering challenge held during the Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center's annual WV Makes Festival at Marshall University. Students in grades 3–12 are tasked with designing a device to protect a pumpkin from damage during a dramatic 10-story fall using one of the Huntington Fire Department's tower ladders. While pumpkin drops are a seasonal favorite across the state, this event provides a convenient and exciting opportunity for students in southwestern West Virginia to join in the fall fun.

Together, these enrichment experiences extend our mission beyond the classroom, creating challenging, hands-on moments where students can explore, create, and grow through STEAM.

ELEMENTARY MATH FELLOWSHIP

The success of the June Harless Center's Elementary Math Fellowship professional learning initiative has resulted in significant expansion in Fayette County. Now in its third year, the project has launched a third elementary cohort and, for the first time, has expanded to include a middle school cohort encompassing all district middle school math teachers. To date, nearly 50 elementary teachers from across the county have participated in the program. The project is structured around a professional learning template modeled after protocols similar to those required for National Board Certification. Open to teachers in grades K–5, the fellowship is positioned to impact the majority of elementary students in Fayette County.

Because of its successes, the Marshall University College of Education and Professional Development (COEPD) has allowed current fellows to apply for and earn up to six graduate credits toward a math specialization or master's degree through the project. With this collaboration, the Math Fellowship has been given university standing as not only a unique professional learning opportunity, but also prestige as a degree-seeking platform for the fellows.

The first two iterations of the cohort have proven to positively affect the student outcomes within the elementary school community within Fayette County. Dawn

"Fayette County Schools are committed to change the mindset of 'I am not good at math' to 'Math is my favorite subject'. Our partnership with Marshall University's Harless Center is assisting with this positive change of mindset."

-Dawn Dooley
Director of Elementary Schools and Assessment

Dooley, Director of Elementary Schools and Assessment, reported, "Fayette County Schools have seen significant increases in our mathematical summative test scores of teachers who have completed the Harless Math Elementary Fellowship. Our first co-hort of teachers were 49% proficient on the 2024 WVGSA, with the state average was 47%. The county average was 40% proficient. The second co-hort was 44% proficient on the 2024 WVGSA and the state average was 44% proficient. The county average was 33% proficient. Our third co-hort is mainly primary teachers. We have discovered our primary teachers are more math anxious than the grades 3-5 elementary teachers. We fully believe if we build math capacity for our primary teachers, this will impact our development of fine young mathematicians as the children age."

These outcomes have prompted the expansion of the fellowship model to include middle school educators, with the expectation that similar success can be achieved beyond the elementary level.

Looking ahead, these professional learning sessions within Fayette County will also expand in conjunction with the Empowerment Collaborative through Mountain State Educational Services Cooperative to provide the June Harless Fellows the opportunity to advance their students in both traditional school-related endeavors and career exploration.

COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

Collaborative inquiry cultivates a professional culture where educators come together to identify challenges and pursue meaningful solutions. Rooted in a shared vision of high-quality teaching and learning, this approach emphasizes clear, non-judgmental observations, data-informed decision-making, and ongoing reflection to ensure instructional practices effectively meet the needs of all students.

With support from the Benedum Foundation, our team launched this work in 2022, beginning with foundational training. In January 2023, we participated in our first Harvard Graduate School of Education session, which deepened our capacity to support schools and districts in implementing collaborative structures such as Instructional Rounds. Inspired by medical rounds, this process brings together teachers, administrators, and external partners to examine a school's problem of practice, focusing on the instructional/learning core—the interactions among teachers, students, and content. These structured, non-evaluative visits allow teams to surface pervasive patterns that enable or impair transformative

learning, assess whether improvement efforts are reaching students, and ultimately unify the school's theory of action and theories in practice.

Importantly, collaborative inquiry is not an additional initiative layered on top of existing work. It is intentionally designed to align with and support schools' ongoing improvement efforts, offering a framework for generating and sustaining action over time. By grounding this work in the voice, experience, and expertise of those closest to students, these processes build collective ownership for change.

Through collaborative inquiry, educators build capacity to collect, analyze, and act on an array of data sources. This empowers teams to address complex challenges, develop responsive interventions, and measure their impact. The result is a rigorous, student-centered learning environment where continuous improvement is embedded in practice—and every learner is positioned to thrive.

SUPPORTING READY, READ, WRITE



Ready, Read, Write, WV is a catalyst for change—it is a movement rooted in the science of reading and connects the many pieces of WV’s state literacy plan. This initiative supports students by focusing on the critical components of literacy that set our children on the path to success. We are seeing remarkable growth as we continue to implement the Third Grade Success Act and its essential components. But this progress does not happen on its own. It takes dedicated teachers, committed families, and engaged communities. It takes all of us working together to make sure our students have the support they need to thrive.

SUPERINTENDENT MICHELE BLATT

Today, the Harless Center is home to five of West Virginia’s seven regional literacy specialists working on the West Virginia Department of Education’s initiative, Ready, Read, Write, West Virginia. This initiative, rooted in the science of reading, a body of research conducted over the last several decades that proves how the brain learns

to become a proficient reader and writer, is a collaborative effort bringing together educators, community leaders, and stakeholders from across the state. Several JHC team members are proud to serve on the statewide Science of Reading Implementation team that is supporting widespread execution of the Third Grade Success Act.

FUTURE PROJECTS

YOUNG WRITER'S CAMP

The June Harless Center's Chief of Staff, Dr. Maggie Luma, is working collaboratively with the Central West Virginia Writing Project (CWVWP) at Marshall University to bring enriching writing experiences to teachers, pre-service teachers, and students in the area. The Harless Center and CWVWP will host a writing camp for middle school students in June of 2025 led by local Cabell County teachers and published authors. By the end of the one-week camp, students will be able to publish their writing and celebrate their work at Drinko Library.

DEEPER LEARNING

Designed to support educators in bringing Deeper Learning practices to life, this professional learning series focuses on re-engaging students through meaningful, time-worthy tasks. Grounded in an apprenticeship model, the workshops emphasize mastery, identity, and creativity—inviting students to take intellectual risks, persist through challenges, and connect deeply with their work. Educators will experience immersive, authentic problem-solving and develop strategies to build environments where student voice, purpose, and collaboration drive learning that is relevant, rigorous, and rooted in real-world application.

EDUCATION CATALYSTS

The first cohort of the Education Catalyst program begins this summer. Participants learn to respond to the real needs of students, staff, and stakeholders through design thinking. Drawing from the same problem-solving mindset used to drive innovation in leading companies and higher education institutions, this experience equips participants to reimagine and enhance classroom, school, and district practices with creativity and clarity. Successful completers earn the distinction of Education Catalyst—recognizing their capacity for sparking chain reactions of creativity, collaboration, and continuous improvement that help innovation take root, spread, and grow.

HALLIE HARLESS DISTINGUISHED TEACHER AWARD

The Hallie Harless Distinguished Teacher Award is presented annually. The prestigious award is made possible by the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. James Harless (Buck and Hallie). The award represents not only their generosity, but also their passion for exemplary classroom instruction for all students of West Virginia and especially Southern West Virginia. The monetary award is presented annually to an outstanding teacher from Boone, Lincoln, Logan, McDowell, Mingo, Wayne or Wyoming counties for his or her effectiveness in the classroom, diligence to the craft and obvious love for and commitment to young people.

2006 Ms. Tonya Hatcher Riverside Elementary School Mingo County	2011 Mr. Dan Gottron River View High School McDowell County
2007 Mr. Doug Martin Mingo, Career and Technical Center Mingo County	2012 Ms. Joni Shortridge Lincoln County
2008 Ms. April Adams, Kellogg Elementary School Wayne County	2013 Mrs. Amanda Sowards Lincoln County
Ms. Robin Ellis Gilbert High School Mingo County	2014 Mrs. Amanda Lester McDowell County
2009 Mr. Jonathan Escue Lincoln County High School, Lincoln County	2015 Mrs. Kelly Bryant Logan County
Ms. Kristy East Anawalt Elementary School McDowell County	2016 Ms. Whitney Preston Logan County
2010 Ms. Heather Woods Lockhart Mount View High School McDowell County	2024 Mr. Joshua Johnson Mingo Central High School Mingo County
	2025 Mr. Robert Thompson Wayne High School Wayne County

HALL OF FAME

Each year, outstanding educators and organizations are recognized for their commitment to improving education in West Virginia during the annual June Harless Hall of Fame Dinner and Induction Ceremony. Hosted by the June Harless Center, this annual event honors individuals and agencies who have made a significant impact on the state's educational landscape, with particular emphasis on rural and southern West Virginia.

Inductees into the Harless Hall of Fame typically include an exemplary educator, a dedicated administrator, and a visionary business, educational partner, or organization. These honorees have demonstrated outstanding leadership and an unwavering commitment to ensuring that all students in West Virginia have access to high-quality educational opportunities.

TWENTIETH ANNUAL

Ms. Michele Blatt
Ms. Emily Calandrelli
Dr. Teresa Eagle
Ms. Sheryl Sandberg

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL

Mr. W. Clayton Burch
NASA Independent Verification (IV&V)
Educator Resource Center
Mr. Brad and Mrs. Alys Smith

NINETEENTH ANNUAL

Mr. William A. Smith Sr.
Dr. Sarah Armstrong Tucker
Dr. Avinandan Mukherjee

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL

Dr. Robert Hayes
Robert C. Byrd Institute
Mr. Gary White

EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL

David L. Roach
Sen. Amy Nichole Grady
WV Public Education Collaborative
National Youth Science Academy

THIRTEENTH ANNUAL

Mr. Ron Berger
First Lady Joanne Jaeger Tomblin
WV Women's Education Forum

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL

Mr. Dan Mollette
Ms. Dolly Parton
First Lady Cathy Justice
Drs. Stan & Barbara Maynard

TWELFTH ANNUAL

Dr. Kathy D'Antoni
Mr. Michael J. Farrell, Esquire
Southern Regional Education Board

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL

Mr. Robert, Jr. & Mrs. Lena Shell
Drs. Joseph & Omayma Touma
Mrs. Katherine Johnson

ELEVENTH ANNUAL

Gov. Gaston Caperton
Dr. Illah Nourbakhsh
Mr. A. Michael & Mrs. Henriella Perry

PAST INDUCTEES

As Dr. Stan Maynard, founding executive director of the June Harless Center, explains: "Individuals selected for induction into the Harless Hall of Fame have spent a lifetime providing creative leadership for educators and business and community organizations. This creative way of thinking about life and work is celebrated annually for individuals who have committed to improving the possibilities for West Virginia educators, families, and children."

The ceremony serves as a powerful tribute to those who go above and beyond to shape a brighter future for education across the state. It is both a celebration of visionary leadership and a reminder of the ongoing work required to support students, educators, and communities throughout West Virginia.

TENTH ANNUAL

Gen. Robert H. "Doc" Foglesong
Sen. Lloyd G. Jackson II
U.S. Sen. Jay Rockefeller

FIFTH ANNUAL

Dr. Ruby Payne
Dr. Steven Paine
Pendleton County School System

NINTH ANNUAL

Gov. Bob Wise
Cabell County School System
Frontier Communications

FOURTH ANNUAL

First Lady Gayle Manchin
Dr. Keith Smith
Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation

EIGHTH ANNUAL

Dr. Lowell E. Johnson
Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin
Mr. Ralph Baxter

THIRD ANNUAL

Mrs. Lydia McCue
Mr. David Ice
Sen. Robert Plymale

SEVENTH ANNUAL

U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, III
Dr. Jack McClanahan
Dr. Rosalyn Templeton

SECOND ANNUAL

Mrs. Beverly Kingery
Mr. Jimmy D. Hale
Verizon

SIXTH ANNUAL

Representative Mary M. Poling
Mr. C. Fred Shewey
Wayne County School System

FIRST ANNUAL

Dr. Jane McKee
Dr. Bernard Queen
Mr. James "Buck" Harless

CURRENT STAFF

Dr. Tarabeth Heineman

Dr. Maggie Luma

Ms. Holly Adkins

Ms. Elicia Barr

Ms. Kelcie Blankenship

Ms. Wendy Chapman

Ms. Elizabeth Crawford

Ms. Heather Ferguson

Ms. Brittany Fike

Mr. Jason Gibbs

Ms. Josie Groves

Ms. Stacy Hacker-Hicks

Ms. Jamie Lima

Mr. JD Maue

Ms. Claire McCoy

Ms. Mandy Moore

Ms. Amanda Rigglesman

Ms. Samantha Sparks

FORMER STAFF

With gratitude to those who shaped our story.

Dr. Stan Maynard	Ms. Katie Keener	Ms. Carrie-Meghan
Dr. Barbara Maynard	Ms. Tracy Komorowski	Quick-Blanco
Ms. April Adams	Ms. Robin Leibert	Ms. Christy Schwartz
Ms. Leah Antolini	Ms. Becky Lewis	Mr. Sameer Shaik
Ms. Laura Bailey	Ms. Stacey Losh	Ms. Brea Shy
Mr. Steve Beckelhimer	Mr. Chris Louden	Ms. Vickie Smith
Ms. Laura Blake	Ms. Katie McDilda	Ms. Carol Specht
Dr. Harold Blanco	Ms. Jackie McMullen	Ms. Ashley Stephens
Ms. Alicia Bossie	Ms. Kyra Minichan	Ms. Kerri Templeton
Ms. Annette Brumfield	Ms. Holly Moore	Ms. Blake Turley
Ms. Natalie Dillinger	Ms. Amber Myers	Ms. Brandie Turner
Ms. Amy Dowis	Ms. Jenny Nash	Ms. Cathy Walker
Ms. Kandice Duggan	Ms. Spoorhi Pattaparla	Ms. Nikki Webster
Ms. Murrell Hoover	Ms. Daniella Perez	Ms. Bernadette Wellman
Ms. Pamela Hoppe	Mr. Allen Perry	Ms. Nicky Whitt
Ms. Danielle Irby		Ms. Debbie Workman

PARTNERS

As we reflect on the past quarter-century, we are reminded of the incredible journey we have shared with all our partners and supporters. Your dedication and belief in our vision have been instrumental in shaping the future of education and empowering the next generation of leaders. It is through generosity and collaboration that the Harless Center has been able to achieve far beyond the dreams set forth 25 years ago. Together, we have created opportunities, inspired change, and made a lasting difference in the lives of countless individuals.

Beckley Area Foundation
Behavior/Mental Health Technical Assistance Center at Marshall University
Brooke County Public Libraries
Cabell County Schools
Carnegie Mellon University
Central West Virginia Writing Project
Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation
Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences of West Virginia
Delta Kappa Gamma
Dollywood Foundation
Dr. Kathy D'Antoni
Every Child Now
Education Alliance
Explorer Academy
Farrell Family
Fayette County Schools
Florida International University
Foundation of the Tri-State
Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation
Hallie Harless
Hardy County Schools
Help Us Grow (H.U.G.)
Heritage Farm
Huntington Children's Museum
Huntington Fire Department

Huntington Regional Chamber of Commerce
Larry Joe Harless Community Center
Lincoln County Schools
Logan County Schools
June Harless Center Advisory Board
Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center
Marshall University's Autism Training Center
Marshall University's Child Development Academy
Marshall University's College of Education and Professional Development
Marshall University's Department of Communication Disorders
Marshall University Division of Aviation
Marshall University Facilities and Operations
Marshall University Foundation
Marshall University's iCenter
Marshall University Research Corporation
Mason County Schools
McDowell County Schools
Mingo County Schools
National Youth Science Academy
Our Lady of Fatima Parish School
OVP Health Foundation

Pennsylvania's Intermediate Unit 1
Plymale Family
Randolph County Schools
Shewey Family
Southern Regional Education Board
Summers County Schools
Touma Family
United Way of Monongalia and Preston Counties
University of Texas Southwestern
Upshur County Schools
Verizon
Wayne County Schools
West Liberty University's Center for Arts and Education
West Virginia Birth to Three
West Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
West Virginia Department of Education
West Virginia Education Association
West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission
West Virginia Public Education Collaborative
West Virginia Reading Association
West Virginia State Legislature
Wing2Wing Foundation
WVDE STEAM Technical Assistance Center
Wyoming County Schools

Thank you for being a vital part of our story. We look forward to continuing this journey together and achieving even greater heights in the years to come.



**JUNE HARLESS
CENTER**