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## **Jobs for West Virginia's Graduates Recommended for Grant** For Immediate Release

On Tuesday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, West Virginia Governor Jim Justice and Secretary of Commerce Woody Thrasher recommended seven projects totaling almost \$3 million in grants from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Investment Program. Among the recommendations was \$130,000 to Jobs for West Virginia's Graduates, Inc.



Pictured (from left) Dr. James R. Wilkie, Randolph Technology Center Job Specialist; Andy Feeney, Regional Vice-President, AT&T; W. Brent Sturm, JWVG Executive Director; Meredith A. Sturm, former JWVG Job Specialist; Woody Thrasher, West Virginia Secretary of Commerce; Mike Hall, Chief of Staff to Governor Justice; Kenny Mann, WV Senate District 10; Stephen Baldwin, WV Senate District 10; George Ambler, WV House District 42; Sue Cline, WV Senate District 9; Jeff Campbell, WV House District 42.

Jobs for West Virginia's Graduates is on a mission to change the future of West Virginia by supporting at-risk young people as they persist in their education, graduate from high school, and make a successful transition to the workforce and/or post-secondary

education. Founded in 1997 under the leadership of then Governor Cecil H. Underwood, JWVG will serve over 400 students this year in Cabell, Greenbrier, Lincoln, Randolph, Wayne, and Wyoming Counties.

The Appalachian Regional Commission was founded by Congress in 1965 as a federal/state partnership to create opportunities for economic development and improve the quality of life in the Appalachian Region. While ARC works in twelve states, West Virginia is the only state wholly within the Appalachian region.

“These projects will not only address many of our community and economic development needs in the state, but also take advantage of our assets so that we can continue to grow our economy,” said Governor Justice. “We are pleased to have such a strong commitment from ARC and our local and regional partners to ensure a brighter future for West Virginia.”

“Thanks to these funds from the ARC, West Virginia communities can build stronger infrastructure, increase access to educational programs and services and infuse more community-based recreational and wellness activities,” said Secretary Thrasher. “I am proud of our team in the West Virginia Development Office that works diligently with the Appalachian Regional Commission to administer these funds to organizations who invest wisely in the Mountain State.”

Jobs for West Virginia’s Graduates is one of the highest performing affiliates of Jobs for America’s Graduates, the largest and most successful dropout prevention and school to work support program in the nation. JWVG has earned the prestigious “5 of 5” National Performance Standards Award for seven of the past ten years! The full-time Job Specialists assigned to each High School the program serves are held accountable not only for getting their students through high school to graduation, but also for getting them connected to the workforce and/or post-secondary education within twelve months of graduation.

### **Jobs for West Virginia’s Graduates’ Recent Results**

	2014	2015	2016
Graduation Rate	97.56%	98.57%	97.89%
Job Placement Rate	67.5%	69.57%	64.52%
Positive Outcome Rate	85%	85.51%	82.8%
Full-time Jobs Rate	66.67%	64.58%	71.67%
Full-time Placement Rate	85.19%	81.25%	81.67%

Drexel University’s Center for Labor Markets and Policy recently reported that at-risk students who participate in Jobs for America’s Graduates programs find full-time work within twelve months of graduation at a rate 2.3 times that of similar students who do not participate. By carefully targeting students who need, want, and are able to benefit from the program, JWVG is able to accomplish amazing outcomes for less than \$1,500 per student.

“Governor Justice and Secretary Thrasher have seen what Jobs for West Virginia’s Graduates’ staff and students can achieve when given just a little more help – help with academic remediation, help with navigating college financial aid, and often just general help with becoming and being an adult,” said JWVG Executive Director W. Brent Sturm. “I started working with JWVG as a volunteer when funding was scarce. With the support of

The AT&T Foundation, the Appalachian Regional Commission, a terrific staff, and dedicated students, we were able to bring JWVG back from three schools to our current eleven. We believe that we can change the future of West Virginia, and we're doing it one mortarboard at a time."

Appalachian Regional Commission funding requires local matching dollars. The AT&T Foundation has provided the bulk of those funds for the JWVG programs in Lincoln, Randolph, and Wyoming counties. Each county Board of Education also contributes to the cost of the program. Donations from other corporations, civic organizations, local businesses and individuals provide most of the financial support for JWVG's work.

Photograph courtesy of the Office of West Virginia Governor Jim Justice:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/govjustice/38390311262/>

Some quotes are taken from the accompanying press release.