



## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **GEAR UP SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA TO HOST AREA MIDDLE SCHOOLERS FOR KICK OFF EVENT**

**ATHENS, W.Va.** – GEAR UP Southern West Virginia will hold a kick-off event for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders from Mercer, Monroe, Raleigh, Summers, and Wyoming Counties on January 27 at the Raleigh County Convention Center beginning at 10:30 a.m. The kick-off celebration will introduce students, teachers and the community to a new project called GEAR UP Southern West Virginia.

The highlight of the day will be scholarship giveaways. Concord University and New River Community and Technical College will each give out two \$500 scholarships. The day will include various activities including games, raffles and prizes. [EJ Carrion](#)—best-selling author, successful entrepreneur, and preeminent thought leader on student success—will serve as the key-note speaker for this event.

“We are beyond excited to kick off this amazing program,” said Kristen O’Sullivan, director of GEAR UP SWV. “We know GEAR UP works and will change what’s possible for our 4,000 students. These changes will have an incredible ripple effect throughout families and communities in southern West Virginia.”

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a federal grant designed to increase the number of students who are prepared to enter and succeed in public and private colleges, universities, and community colleges immediately after high school. GEAR UP SWV will help students from southern West Virginia find the tools they need to attend college or gain other postsecondary education and succeed.

The GEAR UP SWV team will support teachers and administrators, academic and cultural enrichment for students, and help for parents and students in becoming familiar with college options, financial aid, and transition concerns.

GEAR UP SWV grantees will serve an entire cohort of students beginning no later than seventh grade and following the cohort through high school. The grant is a one-time award that began in September 2022 and will continue through August 2029.

Media is invited and encouraged to attend the event. We can receive media as early as 9:30 am on site and as late as 1:00 p.m. For more information, contact Jessica Lilly, GEAR UP SWV Communications Manager, at [jlilly@concord.edu](mailto:jlilly@concord.edu) or 304-384-5981.



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