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TOP STORY

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P-16 plans to bring Bredesen to Morristown

Bobbie Young, Tribune Staff Writer

Hamblen County's P-16 Council has an ambitious plan — to bring Gov. Phil Bredesen to Morristown for a regional forum on his education proposals.

The council also learned Wednesday that it will be featured in a Web-published book on the P-16 movement as an example of how to establish a successful program.

Dr. Joe Rochford with the Stark Education Partnership Inc. of Canton, Ohio, told council members the Stark County P-16 Council faces many of the same situations the local council faces — convincing the community that a strong educational system is vital to future economic development and instilling in parents that the same level of education they received is not sufficient for their children. In remarks before the meeting, Rochford said, "There are three steel mills in our community and not one of them will hire anyone without at least an associate degree. A strong back is not enough anymore."

He said one program aimed at providing scholarship money to encourage high school seniors to attend college found some young people turned down the scholarships because their parents convinced them they didn't need to go to college. Selling local parents on the importance of education is also a part of the local P-16's mission and a big push will be made to involve both parents and students in the governor's forum if the council is successful in arranging it.

P-16 involves education programs from preschool through college. Rochford said he was inspired to write a series of books on the program because "not much has been written about it. There's not a lot of information that can be passed around to other groups." The series is called "P-16: The Last Education Reform." He said if communities and states can successfully implement the P-16 model, further major overhauls in the education system would be unnecessary. "If we begin to believe that all children can go on to college and succeed in college, we can alter the whole system," he said.

The first book, "Reflections on School Restructuring and the Establishment of Local Preschool through College Compacts," is now available on the Web at www.edpartner.org. The material may be used free of charge for educational and instructional purposes. The second book, "Emerging Local, Regional and State Models," will feature Tennessee and Hamblen County. Tennessee was one of the first states to establish regional P-16 councils and Hamblen was the first county in the state to have its own council. This book will be published in 2006, along with the third book, "A Federal Approach to P-16."

Dr. Lori Campbell with the Regional P-16 Council reported Walters State Community College will host a full-day workshop Oct. 27 for math teachers from the 10-county region to share ideas and teaching techniques.

Lynn Elkins, director of the Tennessee Technology Center at Morristown, reported on the governor's conference on education.

"Education is this year's signature piece of his administration," she said. "He encouraged all of us to think grandly."

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