

The McDowell News

Welcome, Tim To Lake James

Welcome to McDowell County, Tim Benton.

The announcement last week that you'll be the new superintendent at Lake James Park is good news for a county that is ready to see a top quality park in operation.

McDowell County has gone through a shift in self-image in recent years, and part of it has to do with our new emphasis on tourism development. Lake James Park is considered to be one of the crucial cornerstones of a tourism effort that may move McDowell into the state's fastest growing business sector and improve the quality of life for all our people.

Your new home was, for about 150 years, a sparsely populated farming and trading community that was the westernmost outpost of civilization for North Carolina. The railroads and the 20th Century opened our destiny to the industrial revolution and many former farmers from Avery, Mitchell and Yancey counties came here to seek jobs in the mills.

In the 1960s our industrial base began to diversify, and that variety has served our working population well, but the 1980s have shown there is a gold mine of both tourists and retirees looking to share the wealth that is Western North Carolina.

We now have a local motel tax which has generated over \$50,000 to promote our area to tourists, a Knoxville ad agency hired to do the promoting, a number of attractions in the county, a good motel and restaurant base, a weekly live country music radio show which is serving both the local audience and drawing an increasing number of out-of-town visitors and an upbeat chamber of commerce which is determined to keep the county on the regional map.

You will also find that your new home is a place of tremendous heart. Already you have had five sponsors donate picnic tables to the park you will be serving. The donations by the Marion

Rotary Club, Pat Davis, The McDowell News, the McDowell Council on Aging and the Dysartsville Community Club are important to your effort to get 30 tables supported privately, a goal we feel sure you will easily reach. (Potential donors should call the chamber at 652-4240)

But those donated tables are only a fragment of what you will find of the volunteer spirit in this county. You will find volunteer groups are ready to help you keep the park clean, help with landscaping, help with equipment and probably offer more help than you'll know what to do with.

Look through the rest of today's edition and you will find evidence of a county that considers caring to be among its most valuable assets. Our home-delivered meals program is operated by volunteers and receives auxiliary funding from church groups and private individuals as you can see on Page 1C.

We also have numerous community groups who work to help young people, old people, put out fires, produce plays, shelter battered women and their children, support our community hospital, promote economic growth, fight litter and generally work at an overwhelming pace to make this county an even greater place to live.

McDowell County is smaller than many of its neighboring counties, and therefore we tend to have a feisty pride in many of our accomplishments. The Lake James Park, which came about through the efforts of Reps. Bob Hunter and Ray Fletcher and Sens. Bob Swain and Dennis Winner, is one of those accomplishments.

Our interest in tourism promotion, our caring and our pride in the county are three assets which we hope you'll use to make Lake James Park the flagship of the state system.

Congratulations and welcome to the finest little mountain county on the planet.