



**FOR IMMEDIATE**

**RELEASE:** Monday, Sept. 25,  
2023

**CONTACT:**

Jessica Lilly

304-384-5981

[jylilly@concord.edu](mailto:jylilly@concord.edu)

[www.concord.edu/gearup](http://www.concord.edu/gearup)

**Five Southern West Virginia Counties Celebrate  
National GEAR UP Week September 25 - 29**

**Mercer County, WV** – Twenty-two schools and five school districts are celebrating National GEAR UP Week from September 25 through September 29 this year. The week commemorates the continuing success of Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), a college access program providing students and families the support and resources they need for college access and success.

Celebrations started in our region a few weeks ago with yard signs you might have seen in Mercer, Raleigh, Summers, Wyoming, and Monroe Counties. The signs read “I ❤️ GEAR UP SWV” with hashtags #gearupswv and #gearupworks and can be found at schools that are part of the program and in the community at places that support GEAR UP SWV.

Since its inception in 1999, GEAR UP has improved educational outcomes for millions of students across the United States. GEAR UP SWV currently serves more than 3,600 students. GEAR UP SWV central staff will celebrate National GEAR UP Week 2023 by visiting all five counties beginning on Monday, Sept. 25 in Wyoming County for the “What is up, GEAR UP SWV Regional Tour.” Parents and guardians of public-school 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders are encouraged to attend the What is up, GEAR UP SWV events on Sept. 25, 26, 27 and Oct. 3 and 4.

Schools are also planning activities to celebrate the program. Students attending Road Branch Elementary can participate in “Student Selfie Days.” Students at this Wyoming County school should dress for daily college and career themes next week. From your favorite college to sunglasses to a future self, the activities will encourage students to think about their future and see success.

National GEAR UP Week is a time to celebrate these accomplishments in our community. For more information about the GEAR UP program at Road Branch or any of the schools, email [gearup@concord.edu](mailto:gearup@concord.edu).

To learn more about the GEAR UP SWV program, please contact Kristen O'Sullivan, Director of the GEAR UP SWV program at (304) 384-5278 or by email at [kosullivan@concord.edu](mailto:kosullivan@concord.edu)

GEAR UP SWV is a grant program funded by the [U.S. Department of Education](#). "GEAR UP" stands for "Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs," and the program's goal is to help more students pursue their dreams of earning a college degree or skillset certificate. GEAR UP SWV is managed by Concord University, in collaboration with the New River Community and Technical College, and many other community partners. For more information, visit [www.concord.edu/gearup](http://www.concord.edu/gearup).

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