



Press/News Release

For Immediate Release

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Contact

Kristen Williams, MSW
IHE Local Coordinator
Phone: 13043845269
Email: kwilliams@concord.edu

GEAR UP SWV Offers Limited Spots for Cool Academy: Power of Youth Leadership Camp

Free overnight camp at Concord University helps students build financial confidence and life skills

ATHENS, W.Va., June 1, 2025 – GEAR UP Southern West Virginia ([GEAR UP SWV](#)) is calling on rising 9th and 10th grade students to claim one of the remaining spots at the Cool Academy: Power of Youth Camp, a four-day overnight leadership experience focused on helping young people build confidence, independence, and smart money habits. The camp takes place June 25–28, 2025, at Concord University, and is free to all GEAR UP SWV students.

This year's camp puts a spotlight on money management and financial literacy, featuring national youth speaker and finance educator [MJ Bridges](#). Students will take part in sessions like Young & Debt Free, designed to teach practical skills in budgeting, saving, and setting financial goals that support their dreams.

GEAR UP SWV partnered with [CoolSpeak](#), a leading youth engagement company, to facilitate the program. In addition to [MJ Bridges](#), students will also hear from [Chris Collins](#), a motivational speaker and author known for inspiring young people to lead with purpose and resilience.

"This camp is all about discovering your voice, building confidence, and realizing what you're capable of," said Kristen Williams, IHE Local Coordinator for GEAR UP SWV. "It's a chance to grow, meet new friends, and have a lot of fun doing it."

In addition to hands-on financial sessions, students will participate in personal development activities, interactive workshops, and team challenges designed to strengthen life skills and build new friendships. All meals, lodging, materials, and evening events are included at no cost to families.

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Spots are limited. Register now at this link or by scanning the QR code:

<https://apps.concord.edu/forms/view.php?id=638682>



SCAN ME

About GEAR UP SWV: GEAR UP stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs and is part of a national grant program funded through the U.S. Department of Education. GEAR UP Southern West Virginia (GEAR UP SWV) is a Concord University program, in partnership with New River Community and Technical College, that helps students graduate from high school and succeed in postsecondary education. GEAR UP SWV is helping the classes of 2028 and 2029 in Mercer, Monroe, Summers, Raleigh, and Wyoming Counties to ensure high school graduation. The program also informs students and families of ways to succeed in a postsecondary education and ways to help fund it. GEAR UP SWV supports teachers, administrators, students, and families on this educational journey. Find more information on GEAR UP SWV social media pages and on our website, conord.edu/gearup.

GEAR UP SWV; securing a legacy of strength and resilience in Appalachia.

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