

WPCC goes downtown with campus

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By STEPHEN HARRIS
News Herald Staff Writer

Looking better than college officials expected, the new downtown Morganton campus of Western Piedmont Community College opened Monday to adult education classes.

The college is taking over the old county tax office and the back half of the Jailhouse Gallery on the old courthouse square. College officials have said they intend to make a "satellite" campus to serve as headquarters for continuing education, or non-credit, classes and to host information about the college.

College crews on Friday began moving from a rented building on Bost Road in Morganton. The crews are expected to complete the move today.

Before the move was completed, adults met in the new classrooms Monday. Adult basic education classes met for the first time at the new campus Monday, and two continuing education classes met Monday night.

The college will lose space with the move, but it will retain its seven classrooms and office space for two programs. Its class offerings will not change, except for a clothing construction class. Plans to relocate that class, which needs a permanent classroom, has yet to be made.

The new campus will host day and evening classes.

The county spent \$22,000 in renovations to the two structures. However, the college will save \$11,500 a year in rent from its Bost Road location, which was owned by Midland Ross Corp.

The downtown buildings received new paint jobs, doors accessible to the handicapped and new floor coverings. The old recreation department offices at the Jailhouse Gallery were torn down and replaced with a large classroom area, complete with kitchen facilities.

In the old tax office, a bathroom was made from a vault.

The old tax office will house two remedial education programs for adults. The Human Resource Development program, which is federally funded, is an eight-week course for the unemployed and underemployed. It teaches classes to help students earn high school equivalency certificates, and it offers social skills training, such as how to complete a job resume and do a job interview.

The building also will house the college's adult basic education program, which teaches high school-level courses and below. The program also teaches English as a second language for foreigners who have located in the area.

The building will have five classrooms, five offices and storage.

In the back portion of the Jailhouse Gallery, a large classroom with a kitchen area will house continuing education classes. Partitions will allow the room to be divided for two classes.

The Jailhouse Gallery, run by the Burke Arts Council, will remain in the front of the building unaffected by the changes.

Six continuing education courses already under way are expected to meet in downtown Morganton this week for

the first time. The HRD program will begin a new class next Monday.

College officials said that when the fall quarter is in full swing, from 300 to 350 people will be served at the downtown campus.

"I'd like to see it become a convenient place, being located in the center of the busiest point in the county, for people who for any number of reasons might not elect to go to the main campus," said Dude Shuffler, director of general education, who will be director of the downtown campus. Kermit Brittain will be evening director at the facility.

Associate Dean of Continuing Education Lamar Wommack added that the adult programs downtown need their own locations in a familiar area. "The closer we put these types of classes to the people they serve," Wommack said, "the better we'll be able to serve them."

The downtown campus also will have an office of information and referral, in which people can get information about the college and any college class or service.

"I think it (the downtown campus) will put us in touch better with the people in downtown Morganton," Wommack said. "It will help us keep a pulse on the community."