

Hopkins Co. striving to become 'Work Ready'

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HOPKINS CO., KY (WFIE) -

Hopkins County wants to join Kentucky's certified Work Ready Community list.

Last month, Daviess County became one of the first counties in the commonwealth to get the designation.

Only three counties in Kentucky are deemed Work Ready, but Hopkins County has created six committees to help them earn this status.

To become Work Ready, education is key and county officials are making sure residents understand that this distinction would make them more attractive to new businesses, thus creating new jobs.

"They can see that we value education. We've assessed the level of education and we are moving the county forward," said Madisonville Community College President Dr. Judy Rhoads.

Rhoads says they're stressing the relationship between education and local employers because in the application they have to show that 25% of working age adults have at least a two year degree, show there's programs addressing work ethic, and show the community is committed to this partnership.

"Right now, we have 7,000 people in our region who have some college, but no degree so we are working on those people to come back and finish that degree, which will help them and the region," Rhoads said.

The application also needs to show that high school graduation rates are above 82.32%.

"We really need to communicate to the students how important it is to be a high school graduate, we really have to show them that there is an opportunity beyond high school," said Graduation Rates Committee Chairman Jason Clark.

Clark says they have programs in place like Operation Preparation and School Counts to improve these numbers.

"What are the reasons students are dropping out? If it's because they're not involved in extracurricular activities, well what can we do to get people more involved," said Clark.

If the state doesn't approve the application, the county will be designated as a 'Work Ready Community in progress' but Rhoads says that will put them on track to meet all six criteria in three years.

The county plans to submit their application in June and could be work ready by July. Of course we'll keep you updated on their progress.