

## **Rally 4 Education draws 100-plus already**

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With more than two weeks left to go, organizers are heartened that 100 people already have signed up for the Rally 4 Education event here.

Gov. Steve Beshear and a roster of other state and national speakers are scheduled to appear at the March 21 program, which is intended to inspire citizens in Henderson, Union, Webster and McLean counties to encourage and support their local school systems.

The Northwest Kentucky Forward regional economic development organization, which is sponsoring the rally, is "very excited" about the interest shown so far, President and CEO Kevin Sheilley told his board Tuesday.

"But the most important part is the follow-up that follows" in each of the four counties, where citizen advocacy groups are being organized to help promote education improvements, according to Katie French, Northwest Kentucky's regional education coordinator.

While Northwest Kentucky's primary role is economic development, the organization said the education of the local work force is crucial to its mission.

Based on the successes of citizen groups in other communities, "This initiative really has the potential to make a cultural change to demanding improvement in education," French told the board.

Most of the school systems in the four counties are excited about the rally, although French reported some resistance from the Union County School System, which is undertaking an internal effort to raise students' standardized test scores.

"The administrators are thrilled to have a third party advocating for education," French said. The Education for Rally will take place from 8 a.m. to approximately 2:20 p.m. on Saturday, March 21, at the Henderson Fine Arts Center at Henderson Community College.

A new Web site, [www.rally4education.com](http://www.rally4education.com), provides detailed information, including a roster of speakers, which includes state Education and Workforce Development Secretary Helen Mountjoy; Joseph W. Craft, CEO of the Alliance Resource Partners coal company; and the presidents of the University of Louisville, Kentucky Wesleyan University and the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce.

A keynote speaker will be Kati Haycock, president of The Education Trust in Washington, D.C. Presentations also will be made concerning successful community education initiatives in Madisonville, Louisville and northern Kentucky.

The rally is free and includes lunch.

To register or for information, visit [www.rally4education.com](http://www.rally4education.com) or call 826-7505 or 877-434-3766.