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**Contact:**

Bryan Chambers

Communications Director, City of Huntington

[chambersb@huntingtonwv.gov](mailto:chambersb@huntingtonwv.gov)

304.962.8138 (cell)

Ashley Stinnett

Communications Coordinator, Coalfield Development Corporation

[astinnett@coalfield-development.org](mailto:astinnett@coalfield-development.org)

304.544.6740 (cell)

**Williams presents check to Coalfield Development Corp. for job training, economic development programs**

HUNTINGTON – Mayor Steve Williams presented the Coalfield Development Corporation with a check for $1,121,000 on Thursday, Aug. 18, that will be used to support job training and economic development programs in Westmoreland.

The funding comes from the City of Huntington’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to help recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The funding that the City of Huntington has received from the American Rescue Plan Act will transform our community for the next 50 years,” Williams said. “Our focus is to allocate ARPA funding for projects that enhance infrastructure, economic development or job creation. Coalfield Development is a proven enterprise that will create a substantial number of new jobs and investment in our community as a result of this funding.”

Coalfield Development’s job training and economic development programs are designed to help people impacted by generational inequality and poverty - now combined with fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic - get back into the workforce. Coalfield's WestEdge Factory and future Black Diamond facility will serve as central hubs for workforce and economic development programs.

These programs include comprehensive job training in construction, deconstruction, apparel printing, woodworking, sustainable industries, regenerative agriculture and supply chain and logistics management. Mentorship to support career pathways also is provided.

These programs will build up participants through personal and academic growth. Participants will be supported to achieve degrees in higher education, technical and vocational trade certifications.

Alongside the job training initiatives, Coalfield programs will support the development of new, small businesses in emerging sectors that are key to Huntington’s economic vitality - creating jobs based in arts and culture; manufacturing; transportation and logistics; and construction.

"Mayor Williams' support for the WestEdge Factory has been unceasing, and we deeply appreciate it,” said Brandon Dennison, chief executive officer for Coalfield Development. “From the earliest days of this project, when all we had was a vacant, dilapidated building and a vision for its renewal, the mayor believed in us and committed to do all he could to see our vision become reality. He has more than made good on that commitment.

Today, WestEdge has become a hub for economic, workforce and artistic development, Dennison said. It has attracted more than $12 million in new investment to Huntington. Since 2010, Coalfield has trained 1,500 people in new economic sectors, created more than 600 jobs and brought $35 million in new investments to the region.

“This has positive ripple effects for Huntington and for the entire region,” Dennison said. “This newest investment from the City of Huntington will take these impacts to a new level.”

Coalfield Development projects that the City of Huntington’s ARPA contribution will result in:

* The creation of 100 new jobs by July 2025.
* $3 million in additional investment leveraged by July 2025.
* 300 professional certifications achieved by Coalfield program participants by August 2023.
* 10 new climate-resilient technologies introduced to the local workforce by July 2025.
* 1,000 community members engaged through 15 community events held at West Edge by August 2023.

For more information about Coalfield Development, please visit www.coalfield-development.org.

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