



Rural Development • Rural Housing Service • Community Facilities

University of Pikeville to Build Kentucky’s First Optometry College

“Here we grow again.”

City leaders in Pikeville, Ky., are very fond of this expression, and with construction set to begin on another multi-million project in the downtown area, it is apropos for them to begin using it again.

Thanks to a \$40 million direct loan through USDA’s Community Facilities program and additional funding from other public and private partners, the University of Pikeville – referred to as UPike – is moving forward with plans to build a 7-story Health Professions Education Building.

The new state-of-the-art facility will house Kentucky’s first-ever College of Optometry, as well as a nursing facility with labs, lecture halls and a food court.

The project is part of a strategic plan to upgrade the comprehensive educational needs of Central Appalachia – specifically Eastern Kentucky – and meet the growing demand for optometrists.

The new education building is one of many projects USDA has helped finance in Pike County in the past few years. Thanks to additional funding provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, USDA provided a \$32 million to UPike for a new School of Osteopathic Medicine. The medical school is now fully operational and accepted its first group of students last year.

In 2013, a \$90 million project to expand and improve services at Pikeville Medical Center was completed using USDA Community Facilities loan funds. Earlier this year, USDA approved a \$15 million in loan and



Rural Development State Director Tom Fern, left, talks with Randy Hart, CEO of Superior Battery, during a tour of the facility on Nov. 24, 2014.

grant funds to build new wastewater treatment facility to benefit residents of Pikeville and surrounding communities.

UPike is located in Pike County, which is part of the USDA StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity. This Community Facilities project is one of many being highlighted by the SOAR initiative (Shaping Our Appalachian Region), a collaborative effort of U.S. Rep. Hal Rogers and Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear to boost Eastern Kentucky’s economic development. Continued growth in regional hubs like the city of Pikeville will change the face of the region and create an environment where economic growth is not only attainable, but sustainable.

Obligation Amount: \$40 million

Date of Obligation: September 2014

Congressional District: Rep. Hal Rogers, KY-1; Senators Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul

Partners: University of Pikeville

Demographics: Pike County has been designated a StrikeForce county by USDA.

Impact: Community Facility Direct Loan to build Kentucky’s first College of Optometry, that also will house a nursing facility, laboratories, lecture halls and a food court.