

A Successful Community

Harlan is a southeastern Kentucky County with a wealth of resources--the scenic beauty of majestic mountain ranges, a rich history and tradition, and diversity in culture due to the influence of residents who have a multi-national background. Harlan County is known for its coal production, for hidden deep within those beautiful mountain ranges is the staple of her economy, "black gold". Coal production is the county's major industry and therefore one of the county's top resources, but Harlan County's most valuable resource is its people.



The people of Harlan County are hard-working people, committed to family and community, and they are not strangers to challenge. The decline in demand for coal has prompted cutbacks in production resulting in the loss of jobs for many. With the loss of jobs comes a weaker local economy that affects the entire county. The folks of Harlan County are accustomed to turning a challenge into an opportunity. Just such a challenge faced the small community of Wallins.

Outline of Need: The City of Wallins was struggling to maintain the City's water system. The water system was aging and the cost to repair and maintain the system, as well as provide service to its customers was increasing, so much so that the cost to provide service exceeded revenue. The City of Wallins had a major problem, a real challenge. The people of Harlan County saw this not just as a challenge for Wallins, a small part of the county, but a challenge for the entire county because that is who they are: a community of people committed to each other and to the future of the whole county.

As the people of Harlan County have done so many times before, they met the challenge head on with determination and vigor and turned the challenge into an opportunity. The troops were ready to go to work, to conquer the problem, but they needed a plan. They needed to plot a course to arrive at their destination.

How Rural Development Helped: USDA Rural Development joined the Harland County Judge Executive, the Mayor of Wallins, the fiscal court magistrates, Wallins city council members, and the board members of the Black Mountain Utility District to form a team to lead the effort and plot a course to success. It was determined that a possible solution to the problem was for the Black Mountain Utility District to take over the Wallins system. Black Mountain was already supplying water to Wallins, and the infrastructure was in place for Black Mountain to provide the service needed. Black Mountain is a larger system with the resources to enable them to absorb the Wallins system.

The Results: The solution to their problem had been decided, but there were numerous obstacles to overcome before the job was done. With a great deal of work and

collaboration, the plan was developed and put into action, and the task was completed. How, you ask? A transfer of assets from Wallins to the Black Mountain Utility District, and an assumption of the Wallins indebtedness on the water system by Black Mountain were finalized. Not only was a problem solved, but as a result of the transfer and assumption by Black Mountain, the rates for service to the Wallins residents were lowered as well.

Challenge presents opportunity, and opportunity combined with putting resources to work equals success—that is Harlan County, Kentucky.

