



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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Growing a Culture of Health

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C. Donovan Beckett, D.O., attended the West Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine and completed a family medicine residency program at Charleston Area Medical Center, a West Virginia University affiliate in Charleston, West Virginia.

In 2004, he opened Comprehensive Health Solutions, a private practice. He has previously served as chief of staff at Williamson Memorial Hospital and is the physician founder of the Williamson Health and Wellness Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center. He also established the Health Innovation Hub as a local resource center in Williamson.

Beckett advocated for collaboration between health care and emerging sectors as the chairman of the West Virginia Rural Health Conference, "Mountains of Innovation," in 2016. He devotes his time to social enterprise development and community revitalization.

Williamson Health and Wellness Center provides clinical care to a coal-producing area, where our primary industry has recently taken a major dive. In the past four years, Mingo County lost more than 2,000 jobs, impacting more than 25 percent of the workforce for an area already struggling with low employment rates. On top of that, the community continues to battle some of the highest rates of obesity, diabetes, hypertension and opioid abuse in the country.

With coal prices dropping and mine companies pulling back, there is an ever-pressing need to address community issues creatively. It is up to us to think about ways to leverage diverse investments and to focus on the development of enterprise with recoverable value in our communities as a pathway forward.

This summer, Williamson Health and Wellness Center partnered with Impact Experience to bring together 22 cross-sector leaders from across the nation with the purpose of accelerating Williamson's leadership and to begin building toward a diversified and sustainable economy. Ray Daffner of the Appalachian Regional

Commission described the experience as, "a chance to showcase innovative ideas and to hear from innovative experts about solutions."

Impact investor Daryn Dodson led the discussion by asking the question: "How do we reimagine, and innovate, with the people in the community and the innovators who have come here with this purpose in mind – all working together to create a new future?"

We have a strong and connected community here, and during hard times, everyone works to keep that sense of community and belonging intact. We really try to focus on building solutions. Our aim is to improve the health outcomes of patients and to simultaneously address the diverse social determinants of health.

We are helping to carve out the crosswalk that connects tourism, agriculture and health care sectors, utilizing revenue generated from the clinic and outside investment to rejuvenate Williamson's downtown spaces and prepare for new business leaders to emerge.



The Health Innovation Hub is a convening space for area entrepreneurs, service providers, youth and business people to meet and build solutions



Williamson residents gather downtown to celebrate community health successes



Learning Journey participants and impact investors gather in front of the historic Mountaineer Hotel

In March 2016, Fulbright students from around the globe came to Williamson to tell a story about transformation in the heart of Appalachia. One participant said, “Everywhere I went, I encountered remarkable individuals who are bringing about development in a way that is relevant and meaningful to people in the community.”

You know the benefits of being part of a healthful community when you are surrounded by people who are demonstrating smart behaviors like eating healthful meals and getting regular exercise. These are key ingredients, or the foundation, for creative thinking and an entrepreneurial spirit to flourish. We plan to keep taking steps to become a healthful community, while at the same time nourishing new ideas and making a place for people to shape solutions.

Visitors are invited to contact Williamson Health and Wellness Center to schedule a tour with our team, to experience the area and to explore diverse strategies for building a culture of health in Appalachian communities. ▾