Dean Wykoff Delivers Plenary Presentation at
38th Appalachian Studies Conference

Dean Randy Wykoff delivered a plenary address at the 38th Annual Appalachian Studies Conference.

In addition to his address, Dr. Wykoff moderated a panel that included Earl Gohl, the Federal Co-Chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission and Sandra Mikush, the Deputy Director of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation. The session was "Many Mountains Plenary: Opportunity & Enterprise in Appalachia."

The session began with Dr. Wykoff presenting "The Health Status of Central Appalachia." Dr. Wykoff showed data about how the 238 counties of central Appalachia compare to the overall health status of the United States in such areas as premature mortality, smoking, obesity, poverty and educational achievement.

Following Dr. Wykoff, Mr. Gohl reviewed the priorities of the Appalachian Regional Commission. The ARC was formed in 1965 as an economic development agency. It works to achieve four priorities:

1. "Increase job opportunities and per capita income in Appalachia to reach parity with the nation.
2. Strengthen the capacity of the people of Appalachia to compete in the global economy.
3. Develop and improve Appalachia’s infrastructure to make the Region economically competitive.
4. Build the Appalachian Development Highway System to reduce Appalachia’s isolation"

Ms. Mikush talked about the work of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, a private, family foundation which is focused on reducing poverty and working towards social and economic justice in the southeastern United States. Their mission statement states, "The Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation assists people in the Southeastern US to build just and caring communities that nurture people, spur enterprise, bridge differences and foster fairness."

The 38th annual Appalachian Studies Conference was hosted by East Tennessee State University. The mission of the Appalachian Studies Association is "to promote and engage dialogue, research, scholarship, education, creative expression, and action among a diverse and inclusive group of scholars, educators, practitioners, grassroots activists, students, individuals, groups and institutions. Our mission is driven by our commitment to foster quality of life, democratic participation and appreciation of Appalachian experiences regionally, nationally and internationally."

“What I’m talking about….is whether we, as leaders of this community, will make the kind of decisions that we need to make to give our children a region that is as healthy as it is beautiful.”