

PRESS RELEASE

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First Lady To Meet Online Friend June 30 *The Education Alliance Uses Technology to Provide Guidance*

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – For the past ten weeks, First Lady Joanne Jaeger Tomblin has been participating in college and career exploration with a high school student she has never met. On Thursday, June 30, 2011, First Lady Tomblin and Natasha Brewer will meet for the first time in person. The pair will share their experiences participating in *WV eMentoring* with others. *WV eMentoring* is a volunteer driven mentoring program that uses technology to help high school students explore their post-secondary education options. The press conference will be held in the Governor's Reception Room in the West Virginia State Capital Complex from 10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Joanne Tomblin is not only West Virginia's First Lady but also a leading advocate for post-secondary education in West Virginia. Since November 1999, Mrs. Tomblin has served as the President of Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College, a community college located in southern West Virginia that provides associates degrees and certificate programs in the medical, business, social science, and technology fields. In her 28 year history with Southern, she has served in various faculty, administrative, and management positions. Mrs. Tomblin holds a B.A. and M.A. in Journalism and a Doctorate in Humane Letters honorary degree from Marshall University.

Natasha Brewer is a native of southern West Virginia who resides in Pocahontas County. She is a sophomore at Pocahontas County High School. After graduation, Natasha is interested in pursuing a career in the medical field where she hopes to work with children who have diabetes.

The Education Alliance, West Virginia's premier statewide, nonprofit research and K-12 local education fund, launched *WV eMentoring* in spring 2011. This initiative will be expanded statewide in the next two years.

WV eMentoring pairs the traditional mentoring concept with online activities that keep students engaged and help volunteers get involved without taking time away from work. Through the *WV eMentoring* program, high school students are matched with an adult whose experiences are in the students' career field of interest. The mentor and the student interact electronically through a secure e-mail system. During this process, students learn about the courses they need to take in high school to pursue their career goals and create a personalized post-secondary education and career profile. *WV eMentoring* can be accessed at www.wvmentoring.org.

No one has been more impressed with the *WV eMentoring* program than First Lady Joanne Tomblin. "The thing that makes *WV eMentoring* stand out from other programs is its personalization. I had the chance to connect with Natasha on a very real level and we were able to communicate about things that mattered most to her," Mrs. Tomblin said. "I have experienced this program's benefits firsthand, and I believe that *WV eMentoring* is an outstanding addition to The Education Alliance and the West Virginia education system as a whole."

"Internet based mentoring and video-conference technologies can help students develop career goals and fill the career guidance planning gap," said Dr. Patricia Kusimo, President/CEO of The Education Alliance. "Research shows students with career goals are more likely to complete their education, have higher self-esteem and more positive attitudes about their future and what they are learning."