



For Immediate Release

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**BridgeValley Community and Technical College Hosting
Freedom Rider Joan Browning**

October 23 lunch and learn kicks off college's Womxn and Empowerment initiative

Montgomery, WV - In an effort to empower womxn across West Virginia, BridgeValley Community and Technical College in partnership with WVFree, kicks off its Womxn and Empowerment initiative (Termed Womxn, the event will include women of transgender and of color), with a "Lunch and Learn" featuring Freedom Rider Joan Browning on Wednesday, October 23.

"This event is part of a larger academic initiative to empower our community to accomplish goals they may see as unreachable," said Dr. Eunice Bellinger, President of BridgeValley Community and Technical College. "We believe Joan's history as a Freedom Rider in the 1960s and work empowering others will enlighten the community and catapult them to seek their own success."

Growing up on a farm in Georgia, Browning worked in tobacco, watermelon, cantaloupe, cotton and vegetable fields before leaving for college at the age of 16, and was one of 439 individuals known as Freedom Riders in the 1960s. She and others boarded busses and trains and traveled to the south where they were arrested, beaten and jailed for challenging local laws or customs that enforced segregation.

She has a Bachelor of Arts from West Virginia State College and was a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) volunteer and Albany Freedom Rider, worked in anti-poverty and social justice programs the 1960s and 1970s, was an organizer of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, served as Treasurer of Georgians for Robert Kennedy, spent 10 years on the Supreme Court of West Virginia's Fatality Review Committee, chaired the West Virginia University Center for Women's Studies Visiting Committee for a decade, and served one term on the West Virginia Human Rights Commission. Additionally, she has received the Governor's Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission's "Living the Dream," West Virginia Women's Commission "Mountaineer Spirit," Commission on Public Service "Lifetime

Achievement" for volunteer service, West Virginia University's Martin Luther King, Jr. Achievement Award and was the first recipient of the "Women Mean Business" Business Woman of the Year.

Now a freelance writer, Browning's experiences within social justice and activism are described in "Shiloh Witness," an autobiographical chapter in the volume *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Moment* and her article "Invisible Revolutionaries: White Women in Civil Rights Movement Historiography" in the fall 1996 *Journal of Women's History*.

BridgeValley's program, Freedom Rider Joan Browning and Empowerment, is scheduled during BridgeValley's student engagement hour from 12:15 to 1 p.m. and will be held in the ATC Building at 1201 Science Park Drive in South Charleston. A lite lunch will be provided by BridgeValley.

About BridgeValley Community and Technical College

BridgeValley Community and Technical College promotes student success, prepares a skilled workforce, and builds tomorrow's leaders by providing access to quality higher education. BridgeValley Community and Technical College will be the college of opportunity for a diverse learner population, offering leading-edge technology, innovative ideas, and dynamic service to our students and our communities. BridgeValley Community and Technical College serves a six-county region including Fayette, Raleigh, Nicholas, Clay, Putnam and Kanawha counties. The college operates two campuses in Montgomery and South Charleston, along with the addition of the new Advanced Technology Center. BridgeValley Community and Technical College is a public institution of higher education independently accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges and a member of the Community and Technical College System of West Virginia.

For more information about BridgeValley Community and Technical College financial aid opportunities, programs of study, workforce training and community education and events, call (304) 205-6600 or; or check the College's website:

<http://www.bridgevalley.edu>