The 22nd biennial Bluefield Coal Show drew an estimated 4,500 attendees and there was certainly an upbeat mood of great optimism among the 195 exhibitors and visitors. The show began with the Media Appreciation Breakfast, which was held immediately before the ribbon cutting to open the show. Buddy Miller, whose father the late Frazier Miller was involved in the show from its inception, carried on the tradition and organized the breakfast.

“We have worked to make a good show every year of the show,” said Charlie Peters, who has been general chairman of the show since its start in 1976. “The show is meant for professionals in the industry to meet other professionals and discuss what is going on,” he said. “It’s a way to get the message out to everyone so they can understand what is happening in the industry.”

Bill Reid, publisher of Coal News, Inc. and managing editor of the online industry website CoalZoom.com and Coal Miner Exchange, also welcomed guests. Reid said he was delighted to be at the coal show “where we have 195 exhibitors betting on the future of our great coal mining industry.” Reid continued, “in the first six months of this year natural gas was responsible for 29% of the electricity generation but coal accounted for 30%, thus coal overtook natural gas and became the largest fuel source on the grid. So, we are definitely back!” he exclaimed.

“That’s wonderful and we are very happy about that,” he said. “We are back as a coal show and as an industry.” Reid praised American coal miners for their work around the clock for the nation and thanked the Greater Bluefield Chamber of Commerce, hosts for the show. “This show
is unique,” Reid said, “not only because of the smell of burgers being cooked outside but also because it is run by volunteers. Let’s thank them all!”

Reid introduced the guest speaker Hal Quinn, president and CEO of the National Mining Association. Quinn said the industry has been the subject to “disabling” federal policies over the last eight years, but that has changed with a new administration in Washington. “Recent federal policies under the last administration, with the regulatory burden, penalized the industry and consumers,” he said, “driving coal out and having little to do with emissions.”

“Coal is rebounding,” Quinn said. “The regulatory environment is providing much needed stability for the industry. All the regulations are now being reviewed bringing about great optimism in the industry and the market place.”

Governor Jim Justice (R) of West Virginia paid a visit to the show and said, "it’s a happy day in West Virginia. The sun is shining and coal is back." Technical Sessions took place on the afternoons of the show with featured speakers, providing more optimism, including Bill Raney, Harold Childress, and Tyler White, the presidents of the West Virginia, Virginia and Kentucky Coal Associations. A complete listing of the Technical Sessions is given here.

The exhibitors proudly displayed the very latest technology designed to increase production and provide greater safety. Held over three days, the Bluefield Coal Show is considered the best regional coal show in the country. This year, the biggest change by far at this highly successful event was the very real optimism expressed by everyone. It is encouraging to see the smiling faces of all of those at the show largely brought about by a federal government that supports our hard-working industry and realizes the value of coal to America.
Hal Quinn with CEDAR Ladies

David Tenney, Eric Barnett, Control Chief Wireless Solutions

KOMATSU Joy Battery Hauler

Regina Fairchild, Annetta Bryant, Nancy Paugh, Friends of Coal Ladies

Shelley and Paul Campbell, Longwall Associates

John Duncan, Irwin Mine & Tunneling Supply
RM Wilson Co. Grilling Burgers

Todd Elswick, Pauls Fans

Pauls Fans Team

Randy Spencer, Jim Allison, John Simmons, Simmons Equipment

Charlie Peters and Josh Cline

Mark Grimmett, NARCO
Southern Mine Service
Ceirog Hughes with Paul Spedding, PGS Associates
Cincinnati Mine Machinery Team
Southern Mine Service
Bryon Cerkiefskie and John Whitfield, LMS
Andy Primozie, Joe Street, Pete Savage, West River
Jimmy George, Kimberly Cranmer, Amy Nemeth, Jennmar