

Learn Computer Assisted Reporting in Mini-Boot Camp at ETSU Oct. 21-23

Applications now being accepted for 12 fellowships that include lodging, meals and travel support

Two years ago, a young reporter at the Bristol Herald Courier uncovered a system that allowed energy companies in Southwest Virginia to take natural gas with minimal state oversight. Daniel Gilbert wanted to know whether the companies were paying landowners the required royalties. He knew the answer was in publicly available data, but he lacked the computer skills to ask questions of that data. With his newspaper's support, Gilbert attended a Computer-Assisted Reporting Boot Camp of **Investigative Reporters and Editors**. There he learned analytical tools that revealed the companies had failed to pay royalties for years, a key finding in a series of articles that won the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service.



Gilbert, *left*, now a Wall Street Journal reporter, started the Fund for Rural Computer-Assisted Reporting (R-CAR) at the **Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues** to give other rural journalists an opportunity for the same kind of database training he received from IRE. Now, with the support of the **Ethics & Excellence in Journalism Foundation**, IRE and IRJCI are bringing that training to Appalachian journalists. The first R-CAR Mini-Boot Camp will be held Oct. 21-23 at **East Tennessee State University**.

Journalists at the R-CAR Mini-Boot Camp will learn:

- Best ways to mine the Internet for sources, databases and other information, using search engines and such tools as social media, blogs, wikis, robots and RSS feeds
- How to request data from government agencies, business organizations and nonprofits
- How to use the Excel spreadsheet program to import, arrange and analyze data
- The basics of statistical analysis, including how to use data from the U.S. Census Bureau
- How to use these skills to produce news stories and post basic data files on websites.

Particular attention will be given to reporting on government (taxes, budgets and spending) and campaign finance, with examples from the region.

Twelve R-CAR fellows will be selected for the Boot Camp on the basis of their applications, a letter explaining the stories they want to do with CAR skills, and clips showing that they are prepared to do such stories. They or their employers will pay a minimal registration fee of \$50; their lodging and meals for two days will be provided, and they will receive a travel subsidy of up to \$150 each, depending on distance. To apply online, go to www.RuralJournalism.org or www.IRE.org. Questions and hard-copy applications (see reverse side) should be directed to:

Al Cross, director

Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues

122 Grehan Journalism Building, University of Kentucky

Lexington KY 40506-0042

Phone 859-257-3744 fax 859-323-3168

al.cross@uky.edu

