



*Loyal Jones*  
**APPALACHIAN CENTER**  
*Tradition. Diversity. Change.*

# We are *all* students, we are *all* teachers

**W**e are all students. Right now I'm learning what Appalachia looks like from the perspective of Berea, which rests on the bluegrass cusp of eastern Kentucky. The pieces in this issue of our newsletter are about learning too, about ways to sustain it, about ways to share it, about ways to act on it.

Recently I was contacted by Alexandra Bradner, an old friend who was writing to ask my thoughts on "the challenges for poets, filmmakers, writers, playwrights, etc., in representing Appalachian regions and their populations." Alexandra had written an excellent critique of MTV's *Buckwild* (a "reality" TV show about young adults living in Sissonville, WV) that appeared in the online magazine *Salon*, and she had been approached by the *New York Times Magazine* about broadening that vision.

The *Times* was interested because on West Virginia's 150th birthday this summer, they ran an Op-Doc called "West Virginia Still Home" by Elaine McMillion, featuring some of the participants

of *Hollow* ([hollowdocumentary.com](http://hollowdocumentary.com)), an interactive documentary and community participatory project that she produced. *Hollow* is about McDowell County, one of the hardest hit boom-and-bust coal counties in West Virginia, that uses cutting-edge web technology to render "a hybrid community participatory project and interactive documentary where content is created 'for the community, by the community.'"

So here are a few of my answers to Alexandra's question about challenges that media makers face in representing Appalachia. As with any representation, the goal is to see and say what is there. The difficulty is selecting a particular something or someone to represent an idea, or group of people, or place—in this case, Appalachia. Reality is much more complex and varied than any single representation could hope to catch. Then there is the hurdle of what we have been told is there and what other people expect to see, both of which serve as assumptions as to what should be versus what might be.

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Summer 2013  
Volume 41 • Number 2

**LOYAL JONES  
APPALACHIAN CENTER STAFF**

**Chris Green**, Director, Appalachian Center;  
Associate Professor of Appalachian Studies

**George Brosi**, Editor, *Appalachian  
Heritage*

**David Cooke**, Director, Grow Appalachia  
and Berea College Appalachian Fund

**Beth Curlin-Weber**, Administrative  
Assistant, Brushy Fork Institute

**Dr. Peter H. Hackbert**, Moore Chair in  
Management and Entrepreneurship; Director,  
Entrepreneurship for the Public Good (EPG)

**Silas House**, NEH Chair in Appalachian  
Studies

**bell hooks**, Distinguished Professor in  
Residence in Appalachian Studies

**Sheila Lyons**, Program Associate

**Christopher Miller**, College Curator and  
Associate Director, Appalachian Center

**Donna Morgan**, Director, Brushy Fork  
Institute

**Lyndsey Mullins**, Program Coordinator, EPG

**Mark Nigro**, Program Associate, Brushy  
Fork Institute

**Mark Walden**, Assistant Director, Grow  
Appalachia

**Rodney Wolfenbarger**, Associate  
Director, Brushy Fork Institute

Please address all correspondence to:  
Loyal Jones Appalachian Center  
Berea College, CPO 2166  
Berea, Ky. 40404  
**859.985.3140 | [www.berea.edu/ac](http://www.berea.edu/ac)**

Berea College and the Appalachian Center are committed to the betterment of the peoples of Appalachia. The unique views and perspectives of individual authors in this newsletter, however, do not necessarily represent the views and policies of Berea College.



# The David working out

by **Diantha E. Daniels**

*Special to the LJAC Newsletter*

In my role as Principal of The David School (TDS), a tiny day high school for at risk students in Floyd County, I share a short reflection each morning with our students and staff. A few months after I'd come to the school, I learned one of our new students had moved in with his papaw because his mom was in jail for dealing drugs. That day, I shared the following: "The true measure of a person's character is how they respond to Plan B."

I went on to talk about those of us who—like me—are planners by nature. I shared how I'd learned that, while setting goals and being organized are great skills, it's even more important to have the tenacity to pick ourselves back up again when life turns upside down, and to have the humility to "reinvent" ourselves when what we thought was going to happen unfolds instead in another way. In other words, Plan B. Or, more poetically, a "new beginning."

Since 1974, TDS has offered a "new beginning" to hundreds of young people. Our average student enrolls at age 16, with reading and math levels around 5th or 6th grade. We're usually the student's second, if not the third or fourth attempt, to find a successful high school program. The two full-time staff and five volunteers who serve during the school year wear many hats: we teach, but we also drive the bus, maintain the building and grounds, and prepare lunch. Most of all, since the adults with whom our students live are often under-educated and over-extended, we are mentors and surrogate parents. That means that, in addition to teaching, we build relationships with our students and do anything we can to keep them in school long enough to graduate and go on to a meaningful post-secondary program or sustainable work.

Students take classes in English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Wood Shop. They're also active in the Grow Appalachia program (administered by Berea College), a perfect fit for their hands-on learning style and our school's emphasis on "Learning While Serving." Classes are small; goals are specific; each small success is celebrated. In a program that combines a nurturing environment with an equal measure of tough love, we help turn lives around. It's hard, but joyous, work.

Let me tell you more about "Bob" (not his real name), the student I mentioned at the beginning. His mom was 17 and a high school dropout when he was born. As long as he can remember, his mom has "done a lot of drugs," but she loves her son as well as she's able when

# School: 'Plan B'



The David School

she's clean. He has a dad he sees occasionally, but like many of our students, his papaw is the most stable adult in his life other than—and just as important as—TDS staff.

When Bob enrolled in January 2012, he'd acquired, with barely passing grades, only a third of the credits needed to graduate, math skills below pre-Algebra, and had missed one day out of every six. His self esteem was so low that when he figured out the TDS birthday tradition was that a student comes forward to stand by me and be sung to by the whole school, he cut class that day rather than be the center of attention.

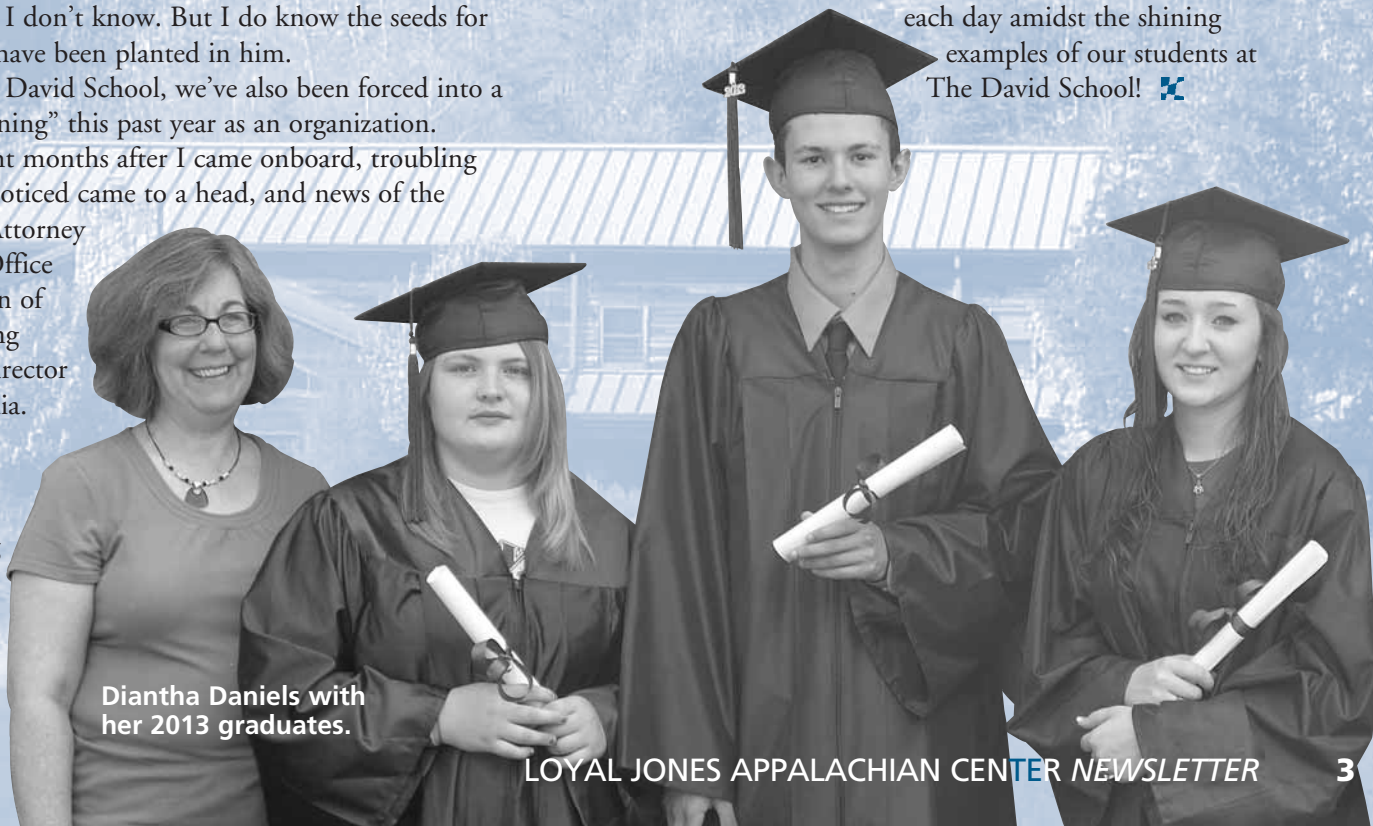
This past April, Bob quietly stood up beside me and celebrated his 18th birthday. We also serenaded him when he earned his provisional driver's license. He's been working his tail off in math, especially, but he's also buckled down in English—where, it turns out, he has gifts as a writer. He also loves music, and one of our teachers taught him to play the guitar. He had all A's and B's this past year and never misses school. He thinks, after he graduates next year, that he'd like to go to the community college in electrical engineering. Will he make it? I don't know. But I do know the seeds for his success have been planted in him.

At The David School, we've also been forced into a "new beginning" this past year as an organization. Exactly eight months after I came onboard, troubling things I'd noticed came to a head, and news of the Kentucky Attorney General's Office investigation of our founding executive director hit the media. Suddenly, instead of quietly functioning as principal and teaching

some English classes, I was being interviewed about whether I thought the school would survive. For the next month, we ran the school on petty cash and the generous help of others. Still, in May 2012, while the director was under a restraining order and a sheriff's car patrolled the highway by the school, we celebrated the graduation of two seniors. Two days later—as the man whom I'd admired and had hired me nine months earlier sat in the audience—I was in the witness stand at the Floyd County Circuit Court as chief witness for the Attorney General's Office. He and his one remaining board member were immediately terminated by court order.

The new court-appointed board and I met immediately to start to save the school. This past year has been as rugged as you can imagine; four days out of seven, I think (like many of our students, I suspect) it's just too hard. But—slowly, slowly—we're making it. We graduated three more seniors this past May. One is the first in his family *ever* to graduate high school. All three will be the first in their families to go to college. With the help and support of so many (like Berea College), we are navigating our own Plan B.

Tenacity and humility. The hard stuff of any "new beginning." What a privilege to hone those skills in myself each day amidst the shining examples of our students at The David School! ❖



Diantha Daniels with her 2013 graduates.

# Still time to think

## Former coal miner's journey to Berea continues

*Editor's Note: the following is the second installment of a two-part article.*

When I was unfairly treated in the mines, the union blood in my veins would occasionally stir. I contacted the UMWA hoping to bring a union to our mine, but the UMWA seemed no longer

### THE VIEW FROM HERE

**Nick  
Mullins**

interested in organizing a company that had non-union roots spanning over three decades. When the mighty UMWA turned its back on us, I turned to the only other people I knew who were trying to bring positive change to the lives of coal miners—grassroots organizations I had read about in Appalachian Voices and seen in the documentary *Coal Country*. I was openly welcomed and invited to write about my experiences as a coal miner—writing I hoped would bring other coal miners to realize the terrible power coal held over our lives. The change I hoped for came in a much different way than I could have ever imagined.

In the midst of another remodeling project, we stayed the night at my parents' house so the children wouldn't have to breathe the paint fumes still lingering in our home. The following morning we were awakened by my great uncle and the assistant fire chief knocking on the door. The home place had caught fire in the night and was completely consumed.

Hand in hand with family members we walked up the driveway to the smoldering remains with a feeling I

could only liken to the many somber walks I've made to the graveside service of a family member. All my great grandparents had worked for, and all my family had worked for, lay before us in charred ruin. The insurance investigator determined the cause of the fire as electrical—the last major project I meant to tackle should have been my first.

Three days later I returned to work at the mine a different person. Going back after losing everything we owned, I could not help but wonder to myself, *Why on God's earth am I continuing to risk my life in this hell hole?* I somehow became stronger than ever before. I never had enough of a backbone to stand up for myself at work. I always avoided confrontation. One night only two weeks after the fire, I finally stood my ground. When I did, I found out exactly where I stood with the company. Two weeks following that incident I quit my job at the mine with the full support of my family.

I began to realize the importance of family and that true happiness comes not from money but from love and life itself. In the months following the loss of our home and leaving my job at the mine, support from our friends and family helped us begin to see our unfortunate circumstances as more of an opportunity than a tragedy. The slate had been wiped clean and a new path lay before us—most importantly, we could try to give our children a better life.

Through our continued work with local grassroots organizations such as the Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards, we came to the stark realization that Georges Fork, with all the mining taking place up and down the valley, was no longer the best place to

## We are *all* students continued from page 1

The trick is to get to forget what you've been told and get to know what you're writing about so well that its complexity lives in your mind and heart. The trick is

to take off the blinders of assumptions and go and see and touch and feel and live and ask and delve and study—and then to be quiet and listen.

What has taught me most about representing Appalachia is something else. While teaching in Marshall University in West Virginia from 2004 to 2012, I had class after class of students write a non-



The burnt remains of Nick Mullins' great-grandparents' home place that Nick was remodeling. The cause of the fire was electrical.

raise our children. Fears surrounding the negative health impacts from local mining practices along with the declining educational opportunities provided by the Dickenson County school system, it became evident that we had to leave our ancestral home for our children's sake. As much as the thought tormented me, I did not want my children to become as attached to the mountains of home as I had. Until we could bring much needed change to the area, we knew our children would ultimately face the same choices of living in a mono-economy as we had.

The path we followed eventually led us to Berea College where I am now enrolled as a full time student. My wife is taking online courses with Bluegrass Community and Technical College with hopes of transferring to Berea for the Fall 2013 Term. Our children are enjoying their new school and the wonderful teachers who enjoy their work. Though we live on a budget that often scares the wits out of me, we are finding more ways to be happy than ever before.

Today I think back to my days spent working hard and breathing coal dust in the depths of a coal mine. Struggling to make it through each day, I could never

have imagined I would one day attend Berea College—a college devoted to furthering the kindness of human spirit. I could not have believed I would be working with organizations such as Sustainable Berea, Home Energy Partners, and Keeper of the Mountains to bring positive change in the way we live and consume energy. I could never have believed I would share fellowship with dozens of other people dedicated to love and kindness as those who are found within Union Church each Sunday morning. During those strenuous hours of work miles back in a mine, coal was the only future I thought I'd ever see.

Though it took losing many of the things we once held dear, we were able to find a better life. Together with my family, we now seek to connect other people with the happiness we have found while we continue working towards a cleaner, healthier future for generations to come. Many struggles still lie ahead, but we know that through them we will find hope, strength, and a means to bring change to a world desperately in need.

*Nick Mullins is a freshman at Berea College. Part one of this article was published in our Spring 2013 issue, which is downloadable from [www.berea.edu/ac](http://www.berea.edu/ac).*

fiction essay that describes a place in Appalachia where they feel deeply connected. My students came primarily from eastern Kentucky, southern Ohio, and southern West Virginia., I learned about hunting, about streams, bonfires, about churches, about trees, about graves, about kitchens. Those pieces were often profound and opened my already wide eyes even further.

Such teaching is what I hope the pieces that appear in this issue and in all issues of our newsletter do. And I want to hear *your* stories about *your* Appalachia too, so don't hesitate to write me and share brief (500-800 word) non-fiction pieces that tell the stories of the lives, places, and people you know. After all, the best way to learn, really the *only* way, is from each other. —Chris Green, Director

# Appalachian Heritage:

*Editor's Note: this article was edited by Jonita Horn from a lecture given by Mr. Brosi to Chris Green's Summer 2013 "Writing the Appalachian Landscape" class.*

**by George Brosi**

*Editor, Appalachian Heritage*

I think of our region as being really diverse. To me, there is no essence of Appalachia. Being broadly inclusive is probably what I work on the hardest and what I am most proud of in terms of the magazine. We really do publish stuff from all parts of the region, from Western Maryland to North Georgia and from Virginia's Blue Ridge to the Cumberland Plateau of Tennessee. We've had three African-American featured authors. We had our Cherokee issue. More members of the Eastern Band of the Cherokees appear inside the covers of our Cherokee issue than any other bound volume.

Another dimension of diversity is including writers at different stages of their careers. Always with our magazine, what we seek is that juxtaposition between the promising young writers and the distinguished writers. We also want to have some mid-career writers, especially those whose careers need a little boost. One of my proudest moments with the magazine was when I learned of the reaction of a young man whose story we accepted. He told me that when he opened up that magazine and saw his first ever publication on the page facing a Wendell Berry poem, he was moved to tears.

In accepting selections for the magazine, what we hope for is something that is memorable, something that

has a unique and appealing voice, something that illuminates the human condition. What we hope for is something that addresses a key question that the region ought to be confronting or is confronting.

Our 40th anniversary issue is not representative of the 40 years of *Appalachian Heritage*. When Al Stewart was the first editor of *Appalachian Heritage* 40 years ago, there weren't that many people in the region that were writing about the region. He introduced readers to the broad sweep of regional writing by reprinting material from other publications. So much truly significant creative non-fiction, especially for its time, has appeared in the magazine, but we could not cover everything in one magazine. We chose to just do poetry and stories in this issue. We also chose to not do any reprints [from other publications], to just do material that the reader could only find in *Appalachian Heritage*.

The basic building blocks of the issue were the stories. We put them basically in historical order. We started with the Cherokee. Then we did WWI. And then we did Harriette Arnow's sense of what it is was like when she was teaching in a one-room school in the late 1930s and early '40s. And we just went on from there

APPALACHIAN HERITAGE



THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE  
WINTER 2013

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**Website Overhaul.** We invite everyone to revisit our website which has gone through something of an overhaul and is now featuring exhibits and events that have recently taken place at the center as well as guides to artifact collections including quilts, firearms, dulcimers and Appalachian stereotypes. [www.berea.edu/ac](http://www.berea.edu/ac)

**The Appalachian Tour.** The Loyal Jones Appalachian Center regularly takes Berea College faculty and staff on tours to

learn about Appalachia. In May, the journalist Peter Slavin had an article published in *The Atlantic* (on-line) that does an excellent job exploring this journey, so we encourage you to take a look for "In Appalachia, a Road Trip for Faculty Makes a Difference."

The **Brushy Fork Institute** team welcomes Mark Nigro as a program associate. For the last decade Mark has served as the Learning-Training Coordinator for Berea College. He will

# the 40th anniversary issue

with Billy C. Clark and Gurney Norman. They gave a picture of the days of the subsistence farm. And then Lisa Alther kind of begins to bring in the greater kind of class division that began to come in when rich people began moving into the region. Pretty soon you have Sharon McCrumb and the dirt track phenomena. It's not in perfect order, but it just continues until we are dealing with more and more contemporary kinds of issues. We were very conscious of the historical stream. We wanted the poems and the pictures to reinforce the stories. And we did want this issue, like all the others, to include not just distinguished regional authors, but promising young writers as well.

One of the big issues in the region is the whole question of second-home and retirement developments. My son, Glade, had a story, and it was his first publication, that was about building a fancy home and the people at the bottom of the economic barrel working to build this fancy home. We didn't have that many stories that dealt with those issues. Yet I didn't want readers to think I was favoring my kin over other writers. We also had a beautiful mosaic by Charles Counts of Plum Nelly, Georgia. It went perfectly with Glade's story, and we had a poem by Fred Chappell, "The Gentrifiers Are in Pursuit." Even Jim Wayne Miller's poem, "The Brier Plans a Mountain Vision Center," was pretty relevant. I didn't know what we could put in to go

**George Brosi**

continue to provide such services for Berea, but Mark will now focus on Appalachian communities to coordinate and implement Brushy Fork programs designed to build individual, organizational, and community capacity around leadership and community development.

Given annually and established in 1970 by the Appalachian Studies Association and Berea College, the **Weatherford Awards** honor books (one in each of fiction, non-fiction, and

with Charles Counts and go with Fred's poem and do the job that Glade's story did, so we reluctantly ran it.

For this issue and for every issue, *Appalachian Heritage* strives to achieve a very high quality of publication—everything from copy editing, to art, to the stories and poems and creative non-fiction we include.

We want to be a literary magazine of quality. We want people to pick up *Appalachian Heritage*, open in up, and react, "Oh My Gosh! Even though they are limited to just one region, this is quality work." I think we perform a really strong role that way in terms of helping to overcome stereotypes and helping to give Berea College and the Appalachian Center a "classy" image in the region. ❖

poetry) that "best illuminate the challenges, personalities, and unique qualities of the Appalachian South." The conferring of this annual award in each of the three categories has come to be recognized as a major Appalachian event. The winners for 2012 are—Non-fiction: Kathryn Newfont's *Blue Ridge Commons: Environmental Activism and Forest History in Western North Carolina*; Fiction: Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Flight Behavior*; Poetry: Richard Hague's *During the Recent Extinctions: New and Selected Poems, 1984-2012*.



## WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Mary C.  
Nienow

# From Wisconsin Appalachian immersion

Nearly a month has passed since returning from a trip to Appalachia with nine University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire students, and I find part of the area firmly planted in my heart. I had initially agreed to chaperone this immersion experience because of the faculty stipend being offered and the chance to see a new area of the United States. Always up for an adventure, I gave very little thought before our arrival to the region. Despite my distraction (after all I had classes, finals, papers to grade, before leaving), Dr. Galen, a native Kentuckian and former chair of the Department of Social Work where I currently teach, inundated us with articles, poems, music, histories of the area. We spent two afternoons becoming “oriented” to the land we would visit. None of it sunk in and the only thing I kept in mind was packing and making sure I arrived on time for our 15-hour van trip.

Our first stop was in Champaign, Illinois, where we visited with Elaine Palencia ([www.elainepalencia.com](http://www.elainepalencia.com)), a poet and storyteller who had grown up in eastern Kentucky. One poignant story she shared, that I continue to recall, was her difficulty transitioning to the “flat lands” of Illinois after being surrounded by the hills of Appalachia all her life. She felt like she was always forgetting something and was vulnerable to the elements of the world, until she realized “that feeling” was not having the mountains behind her. This was my first inkling that we were indeed heading to a very special place.

Our first Kentucky stop was in Lexington. We saw horses, beautiful pastures, and historic sites, but it still felt like something more was waiting for us. This place was Berea. What appeared to be a small, non-descript town was alive with culture, art, history and music. The highlight for all students was the “class” we attended at the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center. Here we were able to interact with students attending Berea College. Each of them had chosen a poem to read to us by an Appalachian writer. The student I paired with shared her story of coming to Berea from Alabama. She had never experienced the mountains before but felt like she had found a place that would nourish her intellectually, spiritually and emotionally. The essay by Doris Davenport she read to me reflected the inspiration she found at Berea: “This area was and is my sanctuary, my sacred place of mental, physical, spiritual, and psychic renewal. I have been disappointed by many events and people in my life; this land never disappoints or lets me down.”

After Berea, we were ready to engage what lie ahead. The hills, the people, the energy seemed to enter into me and compel my connection to the land and the people it held. As we drove through the hills of Clay County toward the home of poet Anne Shelby, the green surrounded us. The quiet overtook us and all we could do was stare in silent wonder. In this state of amazement at the beauty of our surroundings we entered Ms. Shelby’s home. And there we found all the wonder of the outdoors encapsulated in the home and person



# to Berea



Students from Eau Claire and Berea meet at the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center.

of Anne Shelby. Anne enchanted us as she wove stories of the past, her family, and their journey through the world, all situated in the place where we currently sat. Each line on her face represented laughter, joy, sadness, struggle, and perseverance in a place that has struggled to maintain its beauty and integrity in the face of coal mining, mountaintop removal and the need for survival of people so inescapably connected to the hills for.

Our journey continued. We stayed in the Hindman Settlement School, we climbed to the waterfall in Bad Branch, and some of the students hiked even further to the top of the bluff where they could see the hills stretch out before them. We attended “Gathering in the Gap” and ate amazing food with the mayor in Vicco. We were enveloped by the parishioners at Mt. Sinai Church in Lynch and let in to the sanctuary for the Eastern Kentucky Social Club. We witnessed mountain peaks and mountains whose peaks had been removed. We ate, we sang, we danced, we listened, and we came to love this small part of Appalachia.

At the end of the trip, my students gave me a card with a poem by Jesse Stuart. I have this card on my desk and resonate each morning with the final line of the poem: “Better are these who come to share and part / With autumn riches in each eager heart.”

I am so grateful I had the opportunity “to share and part” with Kentucky planted firmly in my heart. ✦

*Mary C. Nienow is a Clinical Instructor and Director of Internship at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.*

## From Reflection Papers by University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Immersion Students:

“From just finishing an Environmental Biology class, it was good for me to see mountaintop removal and hear from the Berea College students. Talking with the Berea College students and comparing our characteristics about our campuses made me compare what they think is important on their campus and what we think is important. They value taking care of the environment while our campus is starting to make improvements on what we can do to preserve what resources we have. These are opportunities people do not get too often.”

—Elizabeth Rose Flannery

“[One] significant event that stuck out in my mind was attending the Baptist church on Sunday. I have never in my life felt that safe in a public place, which given that we were in a different state, surrounded by people I did not know, and without cell phone reception is a pretty remarkable feeling. I wish more people were passionate about something in their lives as those people were about their religion.”

“One thing that I did not expect to experience on this trip was the amount of love that is shown throughout the Appalachian area. All different types of love including, love for the mountains and environment, music, family and loved ones, and the love of tradition.”

—Tessa Linzmeier

# The recycled church

## Once-condemned building takes on new life as museum and cultural center

by **Jonita Horn**

*LJAC contributing writer*

In 2004 in Laurel County, a historic black church—founded in 1869 and originally named the First Colored Baptist Church, but known as Mill Street Baptist since 1961—was condemned and was going to be razed. Wayne Riley stepped in and converted the building to its current incarnation of the Laurel County African American Heritage Center (LHAAHC). Now it serves as a museum and cultural center meant to preserve African American local history. Riley founded the center in honor of his late aunt, Lutisha Riley Bailey, with the hope of conserving the history and legacy of African Americans in Laurel County.

Currently, the Center houses artifacts and photographs, in addition to the historical value of the building itself. The Center also serves as a meeting and gathering place for the local community. Some events, such as the annual celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, are directly related to the racial history of the center, but not all are. LCAAHC is not only a space where people can gather; Riley utilizes the center to distribute donations to the community, among other things. Riley wants to use the center to contribute to the community in as many ways as possible.

It also serves as a partner site for Grow Appalachia and offers participants an opportunity to participate in a community garden. LCAAHC had community gardens before becoming a part of Grow Appalachia, but funding from Berea College and John Paul Dejoria meant they could help even more people. Each individual or family is given a garden plot and supplies to grow food for their own use; in return, they agree to spend a few hours a week working the community plot. This plot is used to feed the elderly at a local assisted living facility, as well as others that may need food in the community. Grow Appalachia is about Appalachian people feeding themselves, feeding their neighbors, and beating food scarcity by returning to the agricultural traditions of their ancestors. The partner site at the LCAAHC certainly embodies all of these. There are family gardens, community gardens, education about gardening, and education for food preparation and preservation, as well as classes to get young people involved in gardening early.

When the center was founded, the church was in great disrepair. Riley certainly had his work ahead of him. However, he is a carpenter by trade, and together with community members, he is working on remodeling the church. They have finished both the main and back parts of the church, as well as added restrooms to the original structure. In the future there are plans to add an office, storage space, and an outdoor patio. Not only has Riley saved this historic landmark from being lost forever, but the non-profit he founded is working hard to make the building a useful, comfortable place for community. Just like the church that would have been a sanctuary for the African Americans that inhabited Laurel County nearly 150 years ago, the center serves as a space for community and education for people from all ethnic backgrounds. ❖

*Jonita Horn is a senior Women and Gender Studies major at Berea College.*





## Promise of early literacy in Clay County

**by Tennant Kirk**

*Special to the LJAC Newsletter*

One day in early June, five year old Mary Sue and her mother arrived at Goose Rock Elementary School to register for kindergarten. Although generally shy, Mary Sue was excited about finally going to “big school” and entered the building with confidence. She had attended preschool here last year and had visited the school once a month for a parent/child play group since she was born. Her mother, Lois, was nervous about the new test that all children take when they enter kindergarten. She wondered if Mary Sue will do well, so Lois decided to stop by Nannie Mae Lumpkin’s office to say “Hello.”

Lumpkin is the Early Steps to School Success (ESSS) Coordinator who visited Mary Sue and Lois in their home for three years and organized a monthly play group that they attended. Lois remembered when Nannie Mae knocked on her door to tell her about the ESSS home visiting program. She was pregnant and unsure about how she fit into an early literacy program, but she said, “Come on in,” and that started a series of home visits until Mary Sue went to preschool last year. During each visit, Lumpkin brought a new set of bright colored picture books to exchange and demonstrated how to read to babies to enrich vocabulary and language development. Nannie Mae conducted assessments periodically to make sure the child was developing according to the predictable stages of growth. As Mary Sue grew into an active toddler, Lumpkin gave Lois ideas for activities to encourage thinking as well as social and emotional skills. Nannie Mae also helped Lois with paper work and separation anxiety as Mary Sue transitioned from home visits to preschool. The supportive relationship continued when the family attended the monthly parent/child groups and Mary Sue brought ESSS book bags home from preschool. Lumpkin and Early Steps provided a secure link between home and school.

ESSS, a Save the Children program, is available at the elementary schools throughout the three Appalachian counties that make up the Berea

College Promise Neighborhood. Connections between and among community based organizations such as ESSS form a system of early care and education that begins the pipeline of services and supports for children from cradle to career. Promise Neighborhood initiatives provide professional development, strengthen collaborations, extend the reach, and build capacity for sustainability of organizations serving young children and their families.

According to the Kentucky Governor’s Office of Early Childhood, kindergarten “readiness” means that “each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child’s success.” A statewide kindergarten readiness assessment piloted in 2012 found that only 16 percent of the children living in the Promise Neighborhood counties were ready for school. Promise Neighborhood strategies include direct services to address school readiness such as parent engagement, family literacy, and other activities to empower families with the skills and information they need to help their children be ready for school and to succeed in life.

When Lois expressed her concern over Mary Sue’s performance on the kindergarten readiness test, Nannie Mae opened the file cabinet and withdrew a photograph of Lois reading to Mary Sue when she was four months old. Nannie Mae reminded Lois of the portfolio of ongoing assessment results, drawings, photographs of block constructions, and other documentation of Mary Sue’s development. The last piece in the folder is a vocabulary test on which Mary Sue scored “normal” compared to other children her age. Nannie Mae smiled and Lois said, “She’ll do fine on that test. Mary Sue is ready for school.”

*Tennant Kirk is Academics Project Director for Promise Neighborhood, a partnership between Berea College and Clay, Jackson and Owsley counties designed to help every young person travel from cradle to career through an educational pipeline supported by family and community. To find out more, visit [www.berea.edu/esp](http://www.berea.edu/esp).*



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## From Spring 2013

Top Left: bell hooks responds to a question while discussing her book *Writing Beyond Race*.

Bottom Left: Berea students after the "I Love Mountains Rally" in Frankfort.

photo by Bob Warren



Right: Mary McPartlan, a leading Irish singer, presents Myra Morrison the Red Foley Award for adding to Berea's social life.