



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

# Totally committed

This issue is dedicated to Berea College’s renewed Great Commitment “To engage Appalachian communities, families, and students in partnership for mutual learning, growth, and service.”

The Eight Great Commitments were first adopted in 1969 and reaffirmed (and slightly revised) in 1993 under President Stephenson. Both times, the concluding Commitment read, “To serve the

Appalachian region primarily through education but also by other appropriate services.” Yet times and relationships change. Under President Roelofs’ guidance, the College undertook an intensive two-year period of examination of the Great Commitments leading to their reaffirmation and (in few cases) revision to better catch the relationships of our time.

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Berea students learn about sustainable development at Owsley Fork Lake.





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LOYAL JONES  
APPALACHIAN CENTER STAFF

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

**Richard Childers**, Appalachian Male Student Advocate and Mentor

**Heather Dent**, Program Assistant

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

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

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

**Jason Howard**, Editor, *Appalachian Heritage*

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

**Lyndsey Mullins**, Program Coordinator, EPG

**Crystal Wilkinson**, Appalachian Writer in Residence

Please address all correspondence to:  
Loyal Jones Appalachian Center  
Berea College, CPO 2166  
Berea, Kentucky 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.

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# Writing a ripple

## a profile of Crystal Wilkinson

by Richard Childers

Crystal Wilkinson was raised by her grandparents on a small farm in Casey County, Kentucky, and graduated from Eastern Kentucky University in 1985 with a B.A. in journalism. She received her MFA from Spalding University in Louisville. Crystal's latest book, *The Birds of Opulence*, won the 2017 Weatherford Award for Appalachian Fiction, the 2017 Judy Young Gaines Prize for Fiction, the 10th Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence, and was featured in *Oxford American*. Crystal has also published two award winning collections of short stories, *Blackberries*, *Blackberries*, and *Water Street* along with many other works.

Crystal is one of the founding members of the Affrilachian Poets along with authors such as Nikky Finney and Frank X Walker, who coined the term "Affrilachia" in reference to the Appalachian region. The Affrilachian Poets have been writing since 1991; they highlight the many cultural influences and the wide array of people that make up Appalachia by drawing connections amongst the people of the region, the similar hardships they all face, and the land they call home.

Having taught courses all over the region and now in the role of Appalachian Writer in Residence at Berea College, Crystal is able to submerge herself and her students into an environment that not only sparks but breathes creative energy into their works. Through reading other authors, workshoping each other's writing for critique and reflection, and participating in public readings of their own stories, Crystal's students become more familiar and aware of the essence of their writing voice.

Urging her students to follow and probe at their own "haunts", Crystal allows her students the freedom to delve into the issues and topics that move them deeply. One of her most powerful lessons is to strum and strum and strum through a piece of writing until somewhere in some shape or form, a writer hits a sharp "twang." Far too many writers are caught up in the beauty and harmony of their art, the bits and pieces that work well. They fail to bat an eye at all of their own *twangs*, the parts that don't belong or distract from the primary focus of the piece. Crystal's style powerfully exemplifies how to propel art to the next level—not by hoarding and worshipping the strums, but by taking the time and paying careful attention to the details in those twangs.

Crystal is intentional about offering opportunities outside of the classroom as well. Students travel to events such as the Kentucky Women Writers Conference, and Crystal has also been able to bring prominent artists here to campus. In October of 2016 she organized the Black Women Writers Symposium that

featured artists such as bell hooks, Carolyn Finney, Joan Brannon, Bianca Spriggs, doris davenport, Juyanna James, Kristine



**Crystal Wilkinson**

Yohe, Xandria Phillips, Amythyst Kiah, as well as Crystal herself. Apart from conferences and readings, Crystal has given her students the opportunity to invest in the next generation of writers in the local community. She has established an ongoing project with the GEAR UP program at Madison Southern High School in which she and her students offer writing workshops and mentorship to high school students.

Crystal Wilkinson now resides in Lexington, Kentucky with her partner, Ronald Davis, a visual artist and poet who publishes work such as his collection of poetry *Caul and Response* under the name upfromsumdirt. Crystal and Ron own a bookstore and coffee shop in Lexington called Wild Figs Books and Coffee, which was featured in the *New York Times*, where they hold regular readings and events for prominent authors or book releases, plus they always have some fresh coffee and pastries.

Crystal has used her combination of experience and talent to launch herself into a successful career as a writer and a teacher. Berea College is fortunate to have such a prolific artist who diligently sharpens her own craft while remaining selfless enough to pass her tools and wisdom onto the next generation of writers. It would prove a challenge to anyone to walk away from one of Crystal's courses without picking up a lesson that resonates with them not only as a writer, but as a human with a soul. ✕

*Richard Childers serves as LJAC's Appalachian Male Advocate and Mentor and graduated from Berea College in 2016 with a degree in English.*

# Totally committed

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The Great Commitment to Appalachia now clearly recognizes that learning, growth, and service are two way streets realized through an engaged partnership of equals. The interconnections of Berea College and Appalachia are myriad, and the College has placed its units dedicated to serving Appalachia and are primarily funded through external source—Partners for Education, the Brushy Fork Institute, and Grow Appalachia—under a new Vice President for Strategic Initiatives. So although you will no longer see their staff names on the masthead of this newsletter, Brushy Fork Institute and Grow Appalachia continue to be a vital part of Berea's Appalachian Commitment.

In addition to stories in this issue about the vital work of the Brushy Fork Institute and Partners for Education, you will also learn about a Pike County Berea student's work with Entrepreneurship for the Public Good, Crystal Wilkinson (our Appalachian Writer in Residence), the Weatherford Award for the best books about Appalachia, and how we're keeping the Appalachian Center's gallery fresh and alive. ✕

—Chris Green, Director,  
Loyal Jones  
Appalachian Center

background photo: © J654567 / Wikimedia Commons / CC-BY-SA-3.0

# Weatherford Award Appalachian books

The Weatherford Awards honor books that “best illuminate the challenges, personalities, and unique qualities of the Appalachian South.” Granted by Berea College and the Appalachian Studies Association for 47 years, the awards commemorate the life and achievements of W.D. Weatherford, Sr., a pioneer and leading figure in Appalachian development, youth work, and race relations, and of his son, Willis D. Weatherford, Jr., who was Berea College’s sixth President (1967-84). These winning authors were recognized at the 2017 Appalachian Studies Conference in Blacksburg, Virginia on March 10.

## Nonfiction Award

In this study titled *Reconstruction’s Ragged Edge: The Postwar Life in the Southern Mountains*, **Steven E. Nash** chronicles the history of Reconstruction as it unfolded in the mountains of western North Carolina. Nash examines bitter power struggles between white anti-Confederates who allied with former slaves and a new market-oriented class of elites who claimed legitimacy from the antebellum period. Nash illuminates the diversity and complexity of Appalachian political and economic machinations, while bringing to light issues the era posed to the South and the nation as a whole. The book is published by the University of North Carolina Press.

Steven E. Nash was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, grew up in Annandale, New Jersey, and currently lives in Weaverville, North Carolina. Nash earned his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in 2009. He is an assistant professor of history at East Tennessee State University.

Judges said they selected *Reconstruction’s Ragged Edge* because of “its storytelling quality and for its important historically contextualized perspective. The books fills a



Nash

gap in scholarship about a much-explored era using previously untold factual and observational anecdotes and analysis. It draws readers into the story and will appeal to a wide readership. It possesses a timeless quality of scholarship that will last.”

Finalists for the Nonfiction Award are Paul J. Adams’ *Smoky Jack*, Wilma Dykeman’s *Family of Earth: A Southern Mountain Childhood*, and *Appalachia Revisited: New Perspectives on Place, Tradition, and Progress* edited by William Schumann and Rebecca Adkins Fletcher.

## Fiction Award

Set in a small black Appalachian township, **Crystal Wilkinson**’s lyrical novel *The Birds of Opulence* explores how several generations of women deal with mental illness and complicated ties to both land and family. The book, which recently received the prestigious Ernest J. Gaines Award, is published by the University Press of Kentucky.



Wilkinson

Wilkinson was raised in Indian Creek, Casey County, Kentucky. She holds degrees from Eastern Kentucky University and Spalding University. A founding member of the Affrilachian Poets and author of two short-story collections, Wilkinson has spent her time as a teacher and professor of creative writing at many colleges and universities. At present, she is Appalachian Writer in Residence at Berea College.

Of *The Birds of Opulence*, one judge said, “This seems to be the book Wilkinson was born to write. Her voice and this multi-generational narrative—which is both heartwarming and heartbreaking—blend to create a melody that stands out.” Another judge hailed *The Birds of Opulence* for its “gorgeous language, metaphorical

# winners for best of 2016

coherence [and] generosity of spirit. Wilkinson's novel absorbs much sorrow, to be sure, but triumphs over it."

Finalists for the Fiction Award are Carrie Mullins' *Night Garden* and Ron Rash's *The Risen*.

## Poetry Award

West Virginia Poet Laureate **Marc Harshman** explores the difficulty of living with an awareness of the inevitable death of all living things and methods of coping with that inevitability in his poetry collection *Believe What You Can*. This collection is published by Vandalia Press, an imprint of West Virginia University Press.

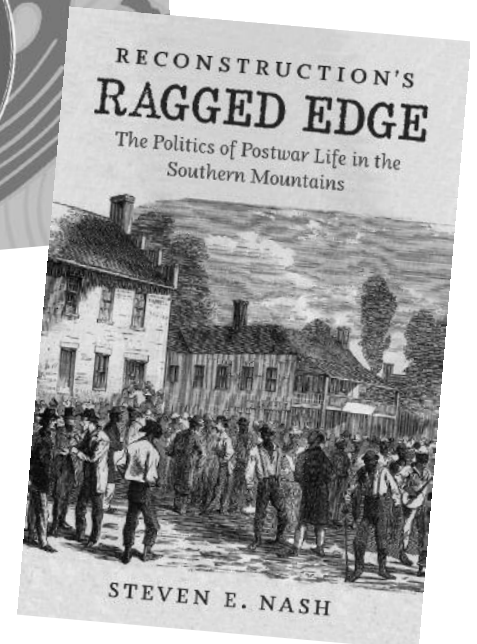
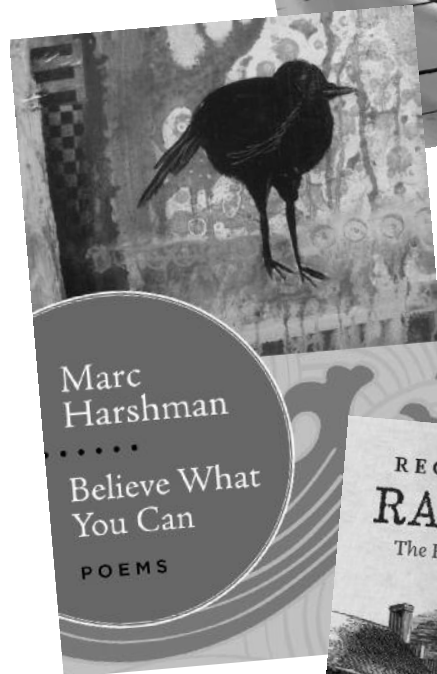
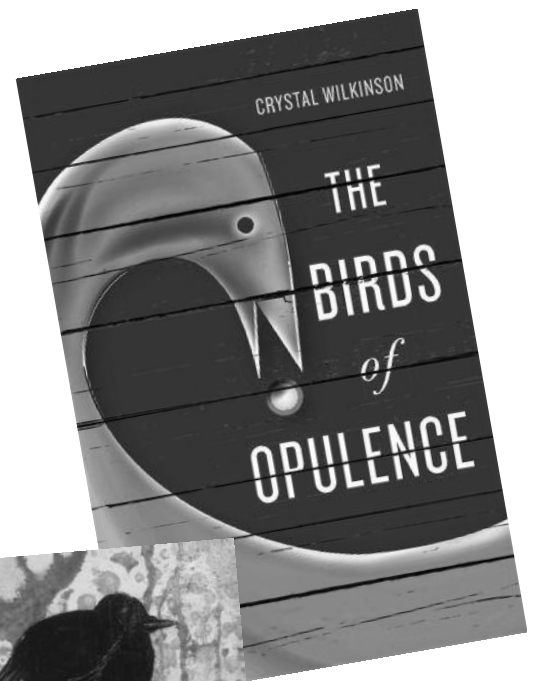


Harshman

Harshman has lived his adult life in northern West Virginia, though he was raised in Indiana. He holds degrees from Bethany College, Yale University Divinity School, and the University of Pittsburgh. For the first part of his career, Harshman taught fifth and sixth grade, and for the last 20 years he has been a professional writer, storyteller, and workshop leader. Author also of 13 children's books, Harshman is the seventh Poet Laureate of West Virginia.

Of *Believe What You Can*, one judge said they found Harshman's poetry to be "enduring." They continued, "His work neither took for granted nor exploited any Appalachian stereotypes. Each poem stood on its own metaphorical and transcending ability alone, relying on no down-home domestic detail to make it relevant or social cause to carry and give it weight. It had no other agenda than to make the invisible visible." Another said that Harshman's collection was "a gem of a book, composed of finely tuned sentences that stand in tribute to language and this region."

Finalists for the Poetry Award are Joseph Bathanti's *The 13th Sunday After Pentecost*, Kathleen Driskell's *Blue Etiquette*, and Rita Sims Quillen's *The Mad Farmer's Wife*. 📖



# Promise Neighborhood

## Moving students and communities toward results

by **Beth Dotson Brown and Kelli Moore**

In December 2011, Berea College received one of five national Promise Neighborhood grants from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant provided the opportunity to embark on a big, bold experiment—could a small, private college in rural Appalachia adapt an approach to education success based on an urban model from New York City? The Harlem Children’s Zone provided this nationally recognized model. It put to work a holistic approach of helping young people succeed that recognized students need more than only academic support if they are going to graduate high school then pursue postsecondary education.

Six years later, Berea College’s Partners for Education (PFE) is sharing the results of this work with the school districts and community partners in Clay, Jackson, and Owsley counties. They are also building upon the lessons learned in the original Berea College Promise Neighborhood (now called Pioneer Promise Neighborhood) to launch a new Promise Neighborhood in Knox County.

Pioneer Promise Neighborhood worked toward ten results identified by the U.S. Department of Education. The initiative created a partnership with schools and communities in the Neighborhood that addressed learning needs from early childhood into college and supported that academic work with family engagement, wellness and safety programs, and arts and humanities

endeavors. This approach resulted in significant gains, especially in children entering kindergarten ready to learn and students reaching proficiency in English language arts and math, both foundations for lifelong learning.

The early childhood work supported parents, childcare providers and preschool teachers in developing their skills and raising awareness among them, and in the general public, of the critical role a child’s early years play in his or her future ability to learn. A partnership with Save the Children’s Early Steps to School Success connected home visitors with families to help parents build a solid foundation for learning. Promise Neighborhood also encouraged transition from home to preschool, then preschool to kindergarten, through events that introduced parents and their children to their new schools and teachers.

Childcare providers and teachers received support in increasing their skills and improving the physical learning environment. “All the training opportunities and resources that the preschool teachers have received have been incredibly valuable,” said Elizabeth Norris, Instructional Supervisor for Jackson County Schools. “What we have worked to do has far exceeded that which is required.”

As a result of this work, kindergarten readiness in the Neighborhood, determined by the Brigance Early Childhood Kindergarten Screen, increased from 16.3 percent in 2013 to 35.5 percent in 2017. Students who received specific Promise Neighborhood services achieved



**Brown**



**Moore**



**Academic Specialist Natasha Johnson works with a student at Sand Gap Elementary School in Jackson County. Academic Specialists work with a caseload of students to improve their skills in math and reading.**

PFE photo

goal of every student having a device to take home, so they could create a 24/7 learning environment for students.

even more with 48.7 percent of them testing kindergarten ready.

Because of this work, more school and community groups are now collaborating to support early childhood education. One example of this is in a remote area of Clay County. Partners for Education has launched a Readiness Bus to engage children from birth to age five and their adult caregivers in a high-quality learning experience in a mobile classroom that can go to homes or areas in the community where people gather, like churches or general stores.

When these young children reach elementary school, they are entering an environment that is different from what it was prior to the Promise Neighborhood initiative. The Promise Neighborhood staff worked with school administrators to determine priority needs in their district. Those needs often included curriculum, technology, and professional development. Owsley County Superintendent, Ed.D., Tim Bobrowski said, “The implementation of Success for All at the elementary school was a huge impact to us. It provided a structure for the teachers.”

The work also encouraged schools and Promise Neighborhood staff to use data to identify needs in the school. Bobrowski says Owsley County now has a virtual data wall that all teachers can use. In addition, he credits Promise Neighborhood with helping the district reach its

At the individual level, Promise Neighborhood academic specialists used data to identify students who needed assistance beyond what the classroom teacher was able to provide. Promise Neighborhood academic specialists then worked with a caseload of students on reading or math skills. This work often evolved into a mentoring relationship where the academic specialists talked with students about their interests, the possibility of attending college, their concerns about grades, and the factors that influenced them. If the need arose, the academic specialist could connect the students and their parents to Promise Neighborhood family engagement events, safety trainings, wellness programs, or art projects.

As a result of this intervention, students are now scoring at higher levels on state-mandated testing. In 2012, 27.1 percent of students in the Neighborhood scored proficient in math. In 2016, that number had increased to 39.9 percent. English language arts proficiency also increased from 37.1 percent in 2012 to 49.5 percent in 2016.

The benefits of this work, however, go beyond the numbers. “At the beginning of the grant if you asked students how many were going to college, only a few hands raised. Now, almost all of them raise. It’s because there’s been more talk about college and students learning that it is accessible,” said Deann Allen, Instructional

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# Entrepreneurial communities in Southeastern Kentucky

## Creating a more prosperous future

by Rodney Wolfenbarger

In early August, the Appalachian Regional Commission released a list of economically distressed counties for fiscal year 2018. Counties receiving this designation rank in the bottom 10 percent of more than 3,100 U.S. counties based on a comparison of factors that include poverty and unemployment rates. Of the 84 Appalachian counties listed as distressed, 37 (44%) are located within Appalachian Kentucky. Mississippi and West Virginia have the second highest number at 12 counties each, followed by Tennessee with 11.

What would it take to move these 37 Kentucky counties beyond economic distress? A recent Lexington *Herald-Leader* article by Bill Estep provided a tentative answer: 30,000 jobs. The article also cited how economic distress is heightened in many Central Appalachian communities where residents are grappling with the loss of an estimated 10,000 coal jobs since 2011.

Lacking adequate employment, many residents are attempting to create their own jobs through starting small enterprises. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, in the second quarter of 2015, 2401 startups generated 9,133 new jobs in Kentucky. Startups are defined as new establishments hiring at least one employee for the first time.

To support and accelerate the growth of such enterprises, Brushy Fork

Institute at Berea College is partnering with The Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky and the national Center for Rural Entrepreneurship to implement an Entrepreneurial Communities project within Clay, Jackson, Knott, Leslie, Letcher, Owsley, and Perry Counties.

This three-year initiative is funded by an ARC POWER Grant provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission and employs a field-tested process that has been demonstrated to generate business startups, expansions, and job creation.

Brushy Fork Institute staff will serve as coaches for this program and work closely with community volunteer teams to identify and better understand local asset-based opportunities and build an entrepreneurial support system. This infrastructure requires inventorying what is locally available, identifying missing pieces that can be connected through networks, and working to fill those gaps through regional investment and collaboration.

The first 12 months of the project is focused on helping communities organize a core team; develop smart strategies rooted in opportunity analysis; identify entrepreneurial talent within the community; and help connect these individuals to the right resource at the right time with a goal of increasing the frequency and regularity of these interactions over time.

The project is already well underway. In June, nearly 40 people attended a

kickoff event held at Berea College. Macke and Deborah Markley from the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship are on hand to guide participants through the process and share other rural and regional examples of where this model has been successfully employed. Macke shared that “economic development is most successful when other types of development precede it” and acknowledged that investments in infrastructure and places set the stage for economic development because they create an environment in which business can flourish.

The duo also told the audience that there is no quick fix for economic distress and a need of reinvention. “Economic development success requires an investment of leadership, time, talent, and resources,” Macke said. “The framework recognizes that each community is unique and likely has different developmental preferences, assets, and goals.”

“Based on our study of rural communities across the United States, transformative change can occur in five to ten years if people commit to sustained strategic action. Unfortunately, most communities are not willing to wait that long on the course,” Macke said. “A perceived lack of progress during the critical first period of years three to seven often undermines confidence and support.”

The first step towards creating a more prosperous future may be ac-



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**ABOVE: Beth Curlin Weber, Troy Price, Mark Nigro and Rodney Wolfenbarger of the Brushy Fork Institute.**

photo by  
Meredith Black



**Two businesses helping revitalize Main Street in Manchester, Ky.: The Makery houses a jewelry studio and provides co-working space for artists. Rogers is an historic jewelry store operating on Main Street since 1949.** photos by Rhonda Bowling

the framing and orientation toward the problem. Macke shared a story about a rural Kansas community dealing with population decline—an issue of increasing importance to Appalachian Kentucky communities that lack sufficient employment opportunities for all residents.

“They were asking themselves *How many people have we lost this year?* Their orientation was toward managing decline not growth,” Macke said.

A Knott County, Kentucky, resident recognized her own community within this example. “The message we send to youth has always been to move out and move on,” she said.

Toward the end of the session, a Perry County resident shared his team’s vision for what success may look like in their community: “Let us create a community where no one has to say I left for a lack of opportunity.” ❖

*Rodney Wolfenbarger is director of the Brushy Fork Institute.*

# Homeplace

## envisioned through entrepreneurship

I'll never forget the day that I hammered my professor, Dr. Peter Hackbert, with questions about our class and its purpose in Appalachia. Early on in the eight-week program, Entrepreneurship for the Public Good (EPG), I felt two emotions intensely: a lingering fear of outsiders and a fierce need to protect my newfound pride. During my freshman year at Berea College, I began to develop a deeper and stronger connection to my Appalachian home—Pineville, Kentucky, in Bell County. Through classes and activities, I grew comfortable and proud of my identity as an Appalachian person of color.

While Dr. Hackbert and EPG's goal revolves around the development of both its students and Eastern Kentucky, I remained wearisome of how a fast talking man from Chicago would handle working in Appalachia. So, when he started speaking about tax bases and adventure tourism, I asked a number of questions—more

to gauge his motive than anything else. However, during this discussion, I became genuinely curious. Something that struck me and never left was his statement, "Right now, everyone in this room is having twenty different experiences." I realized that each of us had different lenses that we viewed the world from, and I couldn't help but see the world as an Appalachian.

EPG focuses on the entrepreneurial mindset in an Appalachian context. For example, if the class were to be seen as a mathematical equation: X would be entrepreneurship, Y would be Appalachia, and Z would be the student. Many students in the class, though, will one day replace Y with another variable like Vietnam or New York, yet Appalachia is *my* context. When our EPG Cohort read the controversial *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance, I read it as a hillbilly. When our class visited the prosperous Abingdon and Damascus in Virginia, I felt renewed hope as an Appalachian. During my EPG experience, I remained motivated by learning all I could to one day uplift my own community.

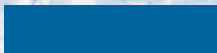
However, I felt an immense pressure to perform and succeed—it proved to be a crushing weight.

I ended up returning home sooner than I thought. Beyond the academic materials and trips the class took, our Cohort had a bigger project in the works—the Daniel Boone Bicycle Trace Trail. Throughout the program, not only

did our class work with Dr. Hackbert, but we also worked with Dr. John Fox, former surgeon turned historian

activist. Dr. Fox led the force of the organization, Friends of Boone Trace. Here's where we come in. Dr. Fox partnered with Dr. Hackbert and EPG to help create a multi-use trail that follows the original path of Daniel Boone as he settled and opened the American West. Overall, the Daniel Boone Trace Trail stretches from Kingsport, Tennessee to Fort Boonesborough in Richmond, Ky., a near 200 miles.

Our class developed the bicycle route and its map alongside the Adventure Cycling Association (ACA), a leader in U.S. cycling and map production. The trail covers five counties in Eastern Kentucky: Bell,



### WHAT I'VE LEARNED

**Breanna Lawson**



**Hackbert**



**Fox**



**TOP: EPG students with Hal Rogers Scholars, the Center for Rural Development’s flagship youth program for rising high school juniors in Southern and Eastern Kentucky. ABOVE LEFT: The Boone Trace meeting with Dr. Fox was held in the Bell Theater in Pineville, Ky. ABOVE RIGHT: EPG students with Damascus, Va. vice mayor Tim Williams.**

Knox, Laurel, Rockcastle, and Madison. Dr. Hackbert took Madison County, and four teams of five students drew to see which county they would develop a map for. In an unexpected turn of events, my team drew my home county of Bell. Again, during the program, I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders.

But here’s the aha! moment when we became budding entrepreneurs. Each team was thrown in the water and was told to swim. Guess what? We swam. In the midst of homework assignments, trips, meetings, projects, and presentations, our team developed an ACA map prototype through teamwork and collaboration. I would be remiss,

though, if I didn’t say it was a strange experience to be working in my own home. For my team members, each moment was a new experience. For me, it was as if I had two lenses on: outsider and insider.

More often than not, it felt as if I were looking into a clouded reality. I grew up poor and was raised by a single mother with health issues. We didn’t have much. For as long as I can remember, I have fought for what I want. So it was an otherworld experience when I landed on the other side of Bell County. Instead of laying my head down in the projects, I stayed at the Pine Mountain State Resort Park. I met former classmates who had always been better off than myself as people who were now serving me. While I never felt better

or above them, I did feel confused as to how I had landed there.

Entrepreneurship for the Public Good helped uncover two worlds of Appalachia—two sides of a poverty line. For the first time in my life, I fully understood the systemic issues behind the downfall of our mountains and their people. Yet I did not and do not feel downtrodden, I feel hope ridden. Through this intensive eight-week program, I experienced firsthand the movements of a New Appalachia, and I am excited to return home and contribute. 🇺🇸

*Breanna Lawson is a sophomore who is exploring a Double Major in Communication and Appalachian Studies.*

## The Summer I Became a

# Not-So-Starving Artist



**M**y summer with the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center's Studio began with redesigning a light show for a cloud constructed of beer-pong balls. After that small design success, Chris Miller, who runs the LJAC Studio, proposed another creative project to me. His vision was to have a series of displays of beings that live in the understory of Appalachia containing information children could understand and learn from. I was on board with the idea and the search began for which critters and plants were common, interesting, and important enough to make the gallery's wall. After consulting the many books, Google, and the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* for possible wildflowers, fungi, salamanders, and other creatures from beneath the brush, we made a list of possibilities. After we finalized the decision regarding what to make, it came time to start designing. Ideas were thrown around about whether or not we should just rip graphics from the internet and go from there. Neither of us were crazy about doing that so Chris, having seen only one sub-par sketch I had made of the cloud for the previous project, asked me if I could illustrate the critters that would be on the displays.

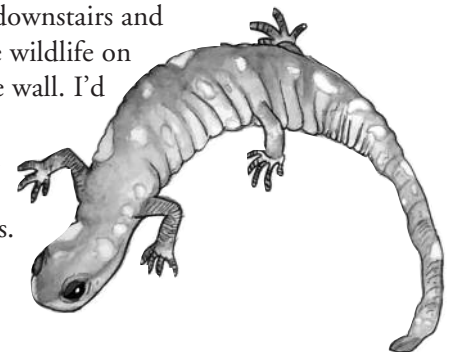
I met him with great hesitation. I came to Berea because my art teacher in high school had faith in my ability, but I hadn't created anything since my senior year. I was hesitant to even begin the project because I didn't want to be embarrassed if it didn't turn out exactly how I wanted, or worse, if I realized midway through that I'm not a good artist. I agreed to draw a single salamander to start, under the condition that if I didn't like my work, we would turn towards a different direction to move forward with the project.

I attempted to make the Spotted Salamander illustration as scientific and accurate as possible while maintaining optimal cuteness—a challenge in and of itself. My mission was to capture the realistic anatomy and colors of the critter, while also making the illustration

cute and visually interesting. Photorealism was the goal, but not an attainable one. Nonetheless, Chris liked my work and encouraged me to keep going. So I spent two full weeks drawing, painting, and finishing a variety of Appalachian wildlife. By the end of those two weeks, I had 20 pages of watercolor, colored penciled, and Sharpied Appalachian wildlife ready to be scanned into Photoshop and worked with from there.

Some days I hated my work. Other days I was content with it. Those are just the feelings that go along with art making: the fear of it not being good enough, the frustration of trying to make something and it not looking like what you had visualized in your head, and the self-criticism alone are enough to stop anyone from being a creator. I learned that it is also possible to burn out from creating so much. It became necessary for me to take breaks from my work or I would get frustrated with everything I was making. It was certainly a challenge, but well worth it. I had no idea I could create a series of wildflowers, fungi, an assortment of salamanders, the necessary Appalachian Swallowtail butterfly, and a crayfish that all look like they belong together and are decently accurate to their realistic counterparts.

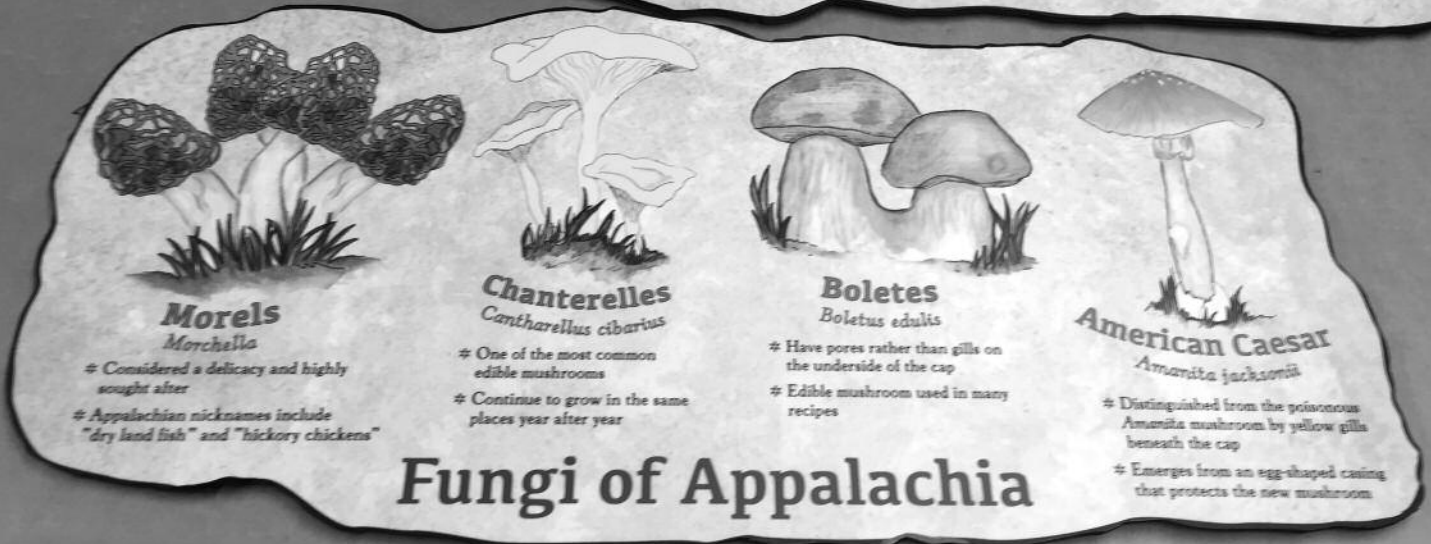
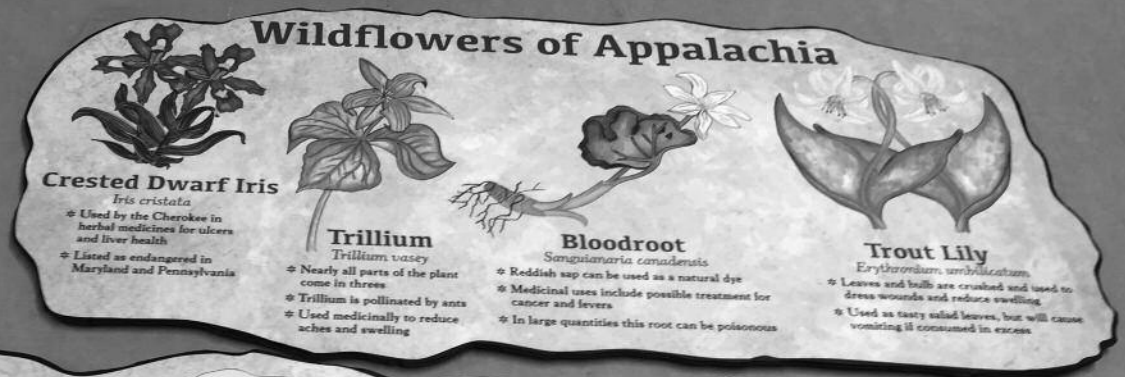
After illustrating, we moved on to the design phase of the project. The images were scanned into Photoshop, cropped, and thrown into a spread in InDesign. I created the layouts for the displays and finally moved past the mountainous learning curve of InDesign. I spent another week playing with the shape, color, layout, and information of the displays. We continued forward to mounting, pressing, sawing, finishing, and finally had the display together. After spending nearly a month looking at and working on these displays, I was excited to hang the newly completed foam board critters to move onto the next project. We rearranged all of the walls of the Gallery downstairs and made a home for the wildlife on the understory of the wall. I'd like to think my coworkers welcomed the new change with open arms and hearts.



### WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Magenta  
Palo

Some of Magenta Palo's illustrations of the 'Appalachian understory', as exhibited in the LJAC Gallery.



This project was difficult but rewarding. I learned a multitude of things I would've never even been curious about. For example, salamanders release toxins through their skin, eating lilies will make you vomit until you pass out, and watercolor colored pencils are the best thing since sliced bread. My coworkers and other visitors reacted to my work with enthusiasm and encouragement, though I felt uneasy about it being on display at first. Now that the display has been up for a while and multiple people have made positive comments about my work, I am far more proud and content with people seeing it on a daily basis.

All in all, I got paid to make art, which

changed my future plans ever so slightly. Rather than following the (almost) practical and reasonable plan I had originally intended to follow, I am going to continue to pursue art and see which road the Appalachian understory might've led me down. The world needs artists as much as it needs teachers, lawyers, firefighters, and doctors. So thank you to the Appalachian Center for pushing me to create this summer—frogs, crayfish, mushrooms, and all—it has been well worth it. ✨

*Magenta Palo is a sophomore exploring Peace and Social Justice as a Major.*



# Promise Neighborhood

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Supervisor, PhD, in Clay County. Allen notes that field trips have given students new and different opportunities to learn. In addition, she says there are also more teachers today who believe that all students can learn.

“We’ve put a chink in that cycle of poverty. Some lives will never be the same because of the work we’ve done,” Allen said.

Elizabeth Norris also recognized the impact of the work, especially in the use of data and the aligned curriculum the schools now use. In addition, she said, “When we began our partnership, all of our schools were identified as Needs Improvement. Now, we have two Distinguished schools and one High Progress school.”

All three of the districts noted the importance of integrating the arts into their curriculum and in the community. “We’ve had more of our embedding of the arts in the schools and the community. It gives them a new way to express themselves and a way to experience the world as it is,” Bobrowski said.

The big, bold Promise Neighborhood experiment has shown that Berea College could adapt an urban model to a rural area, but that adaptation required recognizing some important differences in rural education.

Fast forward to December 2016, when Berea College received a second Promise Neighborhood grant, this time

to serve Knox County in southeastern Kentucky. As the Knox Promise Neighborhood (serving Knox County Schools, Barbourville Independent Schools, and Corbin Independent Schools) considered the lessons from Pioneer Promise Neighborhood, leaders decided to continue the use of case management, a cornerstone of the Pioneer Promise Neighborhood that served Clay, Jackson, and Owsley counties. However, work in Pioneer Promise indicated that academic specialists did not have enough time to fully coordinate wraparound services, such as arts integration, college and career exploration, and community service while providing daily academic support services to students. Considering this in its organizational development, the Knox Promise Neighborhood will use an additional staff member in schools to handle this coordination. The Promise Community School Coordinator, which is modeled after the Community Schools’ site coordinator position, will coordinate all wraparound services within a school and serve as the key point of contact in the community.

At the outset of the Knox Promise Neighborhood, leaders also decided to proceed with a new model of management. Pioneer Promise Neighborhood’s leadership was based at Berea College which is at least one hour away from any part of the Pioneer Promise

**Sunny the Readiness Bus reaches young children and their parents in remote Clay County communities where services for children younger than five are not readily available. The mobile classroom can go to homes or areas where communities gather, like churches or general stores.**

photo by  
Beth Dotson Brown





**ABOVE:** Early Childhood Specialist Jennifer Bryant works with Owsley County Head Start students in the classroom and in their homes.

photo by Beth Dotson Brown

**BELOW:** Teaching artists integrate their work into the school's curriculum. Students at McKee Elementary in Jackson County learn to make baskets.

photo by Natalie Gabbard



Neighborhood schools and communities. Many of the school-based personnel were from the community, but the vast majority of leadership was not. In the new Knox Promise Neighborhood, leadership is based in the Neighborhood and is from the Neighborhood, which is already showing significant signs of higher trust and collaboration.

Many of the early successes in the Knox Promise Neighborhood have built upon the foundation of another grant program Berea College received in 2014, the Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) grant, for Knox County. FSCS seeks to build connections and partnerships among schools and community organizations to improve the well being of the community and the lives of students and their families through academic, social, career, and family engagement services. In the two years leading up to Promise Neighborhood, the work of FSCS developed a vast network of partnerships that greatly accelerated the work on the Knox Promise Neighborhood. With so many partners already committed to the work at hand, and with the addition of Promise Neighborhood, the number of forces joining to make a collective impact is growing each month. Community members are

genuinely excited to be a Promise Neighborhood that is serving as a catalyst and accelerant to many parts of their work.

Keeping the community connected to the work of Knox Promise Neighborhood is a centerpiece of the work. The Knox Promise Neighborhood leadership has launched five results groups that focus on some key elements of the cradle-to-career pipeline—from early childhood through postsecondary. Initially, these community-based groups met every four to six weeks to look at the data for their chosen part of the pipeline. Ultimately, these results groups will review ongoing data and reports from partners on successes and challenges encountered along the way.

“It’s an exciting time in Knox County,” said Kelly Sprinkles, superintendent of Knox County Schools. “We all have high expectations and a commitment to making the most of this opportunity to improve learning outcomes for our students, engage our families, and make our community an even better place to live.”

*Beth Dotson Brown is Project Director for Berea College Promise Neighborhood. Kelli Moore is Project Director for Knox Promise Neighborhood.*



Loyal Jones Appalachian Center  
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In late September students and professors from Berea's male initiatives (Latino, African-American, and White Appalachian) adventured to Cincinnati to get to know each other and learn about each other's cultures. They went to a Reds game, toured the Underground Railroad Freedom Center, and met with elders—Black, White, and Latino—from Cincinnati's Appalachian migrant community, who shared their stories and helped Bereans to share theirs.

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FREEDOM CENTER

