

# The Gravy Infusion



## 2022 Berea College Service Award Winners

Jane Stephenson  
Michael Maloney

### Service Rooted in Appalachia

Jane Stephenson and Michael Maloney have committed their lives to cultivating connection and opportunity for Appalachians. This March, Berea honors these two remarkable leaders by awarding each with this year's Berea College [Service Award](#).

**Jane Stephenson** grew up in Banner Elk, North Carolina, where she observed the lack of opportunities for women in the mountains and rural Appalachia. She made it her mission to help women overcome these societal restrictions by opening pathways to pursue an education and career. In 1987, she founded the [New Opportunity School for Women](#), a non-profit committed to investing in the lives of Appalachian Women and helping them build a successful future. Over 925 women have now graduated from a [NOSW residential session](#) held in either [Kentucky](#), [North Carolina](#), or [Virginia/West Virginia](#).

**Michael Maloney**, whose parents met in a coal camp in West Virginia, was born in Breathitt County, Kentucky. After his family migrated to Cincinnati, he attend Xavier University. Starting in 1968, he began advocating for Appalachian migrants, becoming a community organizer, educator, and Civil Rights activist. He would co-found and later direct the [Urban Appalachian Council](#), which in 2014 was [reconstituted](#) as the [Urban Appalachian Community Coalition](#). Michael has dedicated his life to and creating support for people living in distressed neighborhoods and fighting for justice, equality, and human dignity.

To learn more, you can read Chad Berry's letters that recommend [Michael](#) and [Jane](#) for this award.

Jane and Michael will be sharing stories and insights at the Service Convocation on March 24<sup>th</sup> at 3:00. Visit [here](#) for more information. Streaming will be available.



Jane's birthplace

“We are all immigrants. Therefore, we need to be accepting of the next group that comes to town.”

~Michael Maloney  
Community Organizer and  
Activist



Michael's birthplace

# Activism as a Queer Black Appalachian in West Virginia



Jennifer Wells and Thena

In her [amazing essay](#) for our blog, Thena tells the story how she has lived and brought together her identities as person who is African-American, Appalachian, Religious, Queer, and Pro-choice.

She began her path with a group of first-time and experienced social activists, who worked on the opioid crisis and food-needs in West Virginia. Their work helped get [a law passed](#) so drug felons could access to SNAP benefits.

How does she do it? Thena explains, “Activism isn’t just rallies and protests. Activism is putting together those pieces for yourself and others, no matter the venue or the occasion. It’s also finding joy and finding a home with the people that love you. Any venture for change or revolution should also be met with fun and filling life-giving experiences. Being able to open up and being vulnerable is required part of advocating for someone or something. It’s nearly impossible to organize for people’s needs and rights and not find bits and pieces of your heart to be slowly mixed into the whole batch.”

A-Nya (Thena) Badger is a Peace and Social Justice major as well as a Gender Inclusivity and Spiritual Care Student Chaplain here at Berea College.

She has come of age participating in social activism in her home state West Virginia. During her high school and college years she has found life in and worked with

- [STAY Project](#)
- [Black Appalachian Young and Rising](#)
- [Spiritual Youth for Reproduction Freedom](#)



“I believe if you educate the mother,  
you educate the entire family.”

~ Jane Stephenson