

Mountain Promise

Vol. 2, No.1

The Newsletter of the Brushy Fork Institute

February, 1991

New features:

With this issue we begin a new feature of highlighting one leadership development county team each quarter. John Stanley tells the story of the team from Dickenson County, Virginia. *Front page.*

A new occasional feature introduces faculty consultants. Our first featured faculty consultant is Gary Mahoney, an Industrial Arts instructor and a man with many talents to share. *Page 4.*

Another new feature is **on my mind**, a readers' forum for sharing reflections on leadership and community development, as well as thoughts and suggestions pertaining to the Brushy Fork experience. We kick off this new feature with comments on project selection from a Brushy Fork Associate. *Page 11.*

Focus on: Dickenson Co., VA

by John C. Stanley



Long before its formation as a county, the area which became Dickenson County, Virginia, was noted for the remoteness of its hills and hollows. According to folklore, American Indians considered the area an ideal place for hunting but a little rugged for living. The first white hunter came through in 1751, followed in 1767 by Daniel Boone and others. Dickenson County was established in 1880 from portions of Wise, Russell and Buchanan Counties.

The twentieth century brought development of the county's timber and coal deposits, with the attendant opportunities and problems. Today, timbering is only sporadic, but mining remains the principal economic activity. Efforts to diversify the economy have not been very successful. Attempts at "culturally appropriate" ventures such as crafts and tourism have had limited success; the Cumberland Museum in Clintwood, which attempts to preserve the unique heritage, is dying for lack of support. The county's principal tourist attraction is Breaks Interstate Park which boasts the longest and deepest gorge found east of the Mississippi River.

By conventional measures of living standards, Dickenson County ranks low. Exceedingly rural, the county has only three small towns: Haysi, Clinchco and Clintwood. Of these, the first two are former mining camps. Clintwood, the county seat, is home to all two of the stoplights in the county, as well as the only franchised restaurants.

The county is split in several ways. Party politics are pervasive, with festering feuds dating back as far as the Civil War. Jealousies between the Clintwood and Haysi areas

have sometimes led to the inadvertent sabotage of much-needed projects. Citizens are divided between those who distrust the mining companies and those who defend the hand that feeds.

It was in this setting that the fourteen Dickenson County residents in the Brushy Fork leadership development program undertook their team project. Their six-month goal was to organize a one-day leadership conference; many hoped the conference would serve to create a countywide clamor for a community center.

On the morning of October 26, 1990, nearly sixty community leaders crowded into the banquet room of Rhododendron Lodge at Breaks Interstate Park to attend the first-ever Dickenson County Leadership Conference. At the end of a day filled with speakers, testimonials, group interactions, and inspiring entertainment, twenty-two attenders agreed to work for a county community center. Representative of all areas of the county, the volunteers formed a steering committee and agreed to launch a campaign to build the community center. The fourteen Brushy Fork participants drove out of the Breaks that evening with a deep sense of satisfaction. Five long months of numerous meetings, careful planning, and attention to media exposure appeared to have paid off.

The events leading up to the conference started back in June of 1989 when the

continued on next page



individuals selected for the Brushy Fork leadership development program met on their own initiative with four county leaders. The four shared their perspectives and visions for the county and answered questions. During the meeting the group got acquainted, made travel arrangements, and began developing a feeling of camaraderie.

At the initial workshop in Berea, team members responded enthusiastically to challenging discussions of leadership skills and ideas. During the project selection portion of the workshop several possible projects were mentioned, but the list was quickly narrowed to two ideas. Feeling ambitious, many liked the idea of getting a community center to serve the entire county. A few were so impressed with the BFI workshop that they wanted to offer a similar forum to the county's leadership. A compromise was agreed upon whereby their official BFI project would be a one-day conference in October, specifically designed to encourage the development of a community center project. The drive for a community center itself would be considered beyond the scope of their six-month training period, but it remained the unofficial long-term goal for a majority of the group.

Back in Dickenson County, the team hatched a scheme to create local interest by building suspense through a series of newspaper articles and then unveiling the project with great fanfare at a public event. Most felt that the success of the October conference would depend greatly on having the group taken seriously by the public. The media campaign

Gerald Gray, Dickenson's Commonwealth Attorney, noted, "I like your group because it seems free of the partisanship of most of our local groups."

succeeded in piquing curiosity, and reporters soon began calling group members for quotes.

With this momentum, it seemed doubly important that the public not be disappointed. The group carefully planned the July 11th unveiling to be short, snappy and centrally located. Special invitations were issued to key people in the county. When the day came approximately 65 people turned up. After a short period of refreshments and brief speeches the surprise began to unfold. . . As Bob Spera began explaining the project, certain people (planted in the audience to represent different parts of the county) began to interrupt, bicker, and then walked out! Moments later they returned with tools, smiling and whistling, and began to pantomime working together. Singers rose from the audience and led everyone in a rousing version of "We Are the World," adapted especially for Dickenson County. While the singing continued Bob exhorted the audience to support the project, and group members unfurled a banner which read, "Let's All Work Together for Dickenson County." Several people got a bit choked-up and teary-eyed.

Momentum from the July 11th success inspired the group to redouble its efforts to make future events equally successful. Through a series of meetings, plans were made for the upcoming conference. Having fourteen members ensured enough attenders to make all meetings productive—even when attendance was down to six or seven people. Every effort was made to employ ideas gleaned from the BFI workshop. For instance, at the beginning of each meeting, facilitators circulated a printed agenda. Each meeting started and ended on time, interaction was encouraged and, for the most part, group members managed to stay on the topic at hand.

Throughout the five months, individual members arose to meet whatever challenges confronted the group. For example, a meeting was held in early August to find a way to finance the October conference. Betty Collius spoke up and indicated that she had already worked out many of the details necessary for a walkathon; "Walk for Dickenson County" was born. The sentiment fit well with the growing theme of county unity that had become a part of the group's work.

Although promotion time was short, the turnout on September 8 for the "Walk for Dickenson County" was respectable. Among the marchers were sports teams and issue groups carrying placards. The walkathon grossed \$1500, more than enough money for the October conference.

Behind the scenes, diligent work continued. The publicity campaign seemed to take on a life of its own. An editor of one of the larger Southwest Virginia papers called, wanting to arrange a series of articles on this "new political group". Discouraging rumors and misunderstandings while attempting to maintain media interest proved challenging, but not overwhelming. Gerald Gray, Dickenson's Commonwealth Attorney, noted, "I like your group because it seems free of the partisanship of most of our local groups."

Final preparations were made. At least one member expressed concern about a possible letdown if the conference didn't measure up to all the attention. Then came October 26th—the actual event itself! The remarks, presentations, musical entertainment, luncheon, small-group discussions, and finally the formation of the steering committee—all segments seemed to work well. Evaluation sheets were filled with praise. After adjournment, the fourteen organizers shook hands and smiled broadly with a shared sense of fulfillment. The day had gone well.

In late November the team returned to Berea for a final workshop and to share their story with other Brushy Fork Associates. With a scrapbook and a video tape, the team tried to convey some of the spirit of promise and community harmony that they had felt and fostered during the past months.

Months later, many of the original BFI participants have remained with the steering committee, while others have shifted on to different interests. All of the original team members are deeply appreciative of the personal growth and leadership skills gained through their experience with Brushy Fork. While it is too early to predict how long it will be before Dickenson County has its community center, a number of dedicated souls continue to strive toward that goal for a united Dickenson County.

Meet the Dickenson County team

- Rebecca Browning—a mother of two and a UMWA wife, Becky is active in solid waste issues.
- Robin Browning—a high school senior, karate expert, Robin served as the team's recorder, and may soon attend Berea College.
- Betty Collius—a mother who was very active during the UMWA strike, Betty raised most of the group's funds.
- Phyllis Deel—a Berea graduate and mother whose office became the team's de facto headquarters.
- Florence Edwards—the president of Extension Home Makers of Dickenson County, a mother and UMWA widow, Florence served as the group's historian.
- Marzetta Fleming—Marzetta works at a local bank and helped organize a county fair. She worked with the team's finances.
- Betty Killen—a member of the tourism committee and the library club, Betty works at a bank and helped with the group's finances.
- Gay Martin—former director of the Crisis Center, a mother and wife of disabled UMWA member.
- Carmen Mullins—a high school senior, active in sports and the President of UMWA Youth Auxiliary, which she helped found during the famous 1989 strike.
- Geraldine Scardo—a Berea graduate and mother who works in social services and is active in environmental issues.
- Bob Spera—a hospital administrator and father, Bob served as co-facilitator and moderator of all group activities.
- John Stanley—a father and merchant, one of two males in the group, John served as the team's publicity chair.
- Avis Sutherland—one of the leading advocates for the community center, mother, Avis moved away in July.
- Melinda Wallen—the director of the Office on Youth and a mother, Melinda served as co-facilitator for the team.
- Stella Williams—the customer service manager at major supermarket and a mother, Stella worked with the group's finances.



Introducing: faculty consultant

Gary Mahoney



Is your county team working on economic development? Brushy Fork Associates have a wonderful resource in the person of Gary Mahoney, a Berea College Industrial Arts instructor. With experience in manufacturing, wood, computers, and industrial consulting, Gary Mahoney is one of the faculty consultants offering technical assistance to BF Associates and county teams.

It was Gary's interest in the Appalachian region and in economic development that moved him to respond to a letter from Brushy Fork Institute seeking faculty consultants. "My homeplace in Trimble County, Kentucky, is outside the geographic boundaries of Appalachia, but I identify strongly with the region. I was interested in what Brushy Fork was doing and thought I'd like to help." Those Brushy Fork Associates who began the leadership development program in September of 1990 may remember meeting Gary, as he participated in the initial workshop of that cycle.

One exciting project which may interest Associates is a solar kiln developed by Gary, with the involvement of students in Industrial Arts classes at Berea. Combined with a portable saw mill, the low-cost solar kiln presents new opportunities in processing lumber. The project began when the Berea Industrial Arts department purchased a portable sawmill in order to teach primary wood processing. Before last year, students purchased dried lumber for their labwork. The addition of the portable saw meant students could

now learn to saw logs into lumber. But with no local kilns available for drying the green lumber, a crucial element was missing. Gary studied several different types of kilns and decided that a solar kiln would best suit the needs of the Industrial Arts program. In order to make a solar kiln that could be readily replicated by small mills and individuals, Gary and his students concentrated on producing the least expensive kiln from materials easily available in the region. The resulting design has worked even better than hoped. "We've been monitoring the kiln since early last summer. We've dried four loads of wood and are now starting our fifth. The drying times have ranged from 28 days for walnut, to eight weeks for oak—that's faster than what we expected." The moisture content of the wood coming out of the kiln is in the range suitable for furniture-making in this area, 6-8%.

What might the kiln mean for timber operations in the region? Gary says that most of the timber now leaves the region as logs and is taken to big mills where it is sawn and dried. Logs currently go out of Kentucky at as low as 6-8¢ per board foot, says Gary, and then come back in as processed wood at \$2- \$3 (or higher) per board foot. More money can be kept at home if secondary processing takes place at local sites. "The solar kiln is not for the big operators," says Gary, "but it can make a difference for communities that can support a small market." For instance, an area with many craftworkers is a good location for a

solar kiln. A small mill can produce high quality wood for craftworkers who'd have to pay higher prices for wood processed at distant mills. The craftworkers save money while the local mill turns a respectable profit.

Modifications in the kiln design are being finalized with the use of a computer drafting program. Associates might note that plans will be made available at reproduction cost.

Innovations in wood technology is only one of the many offerings Gary is willing to share with Brushy Fork Associates. He may also be called upon for help with:

- evaluating the feasibility of markets for wood and wood products.
- assessing the compatibility of industries and communities.
- evaluating crafts as an economic development strategy.

In addition, Gary is willing to lend technical assistance in industrial applications of computers, including: computer-integrated manufacturing, production, design, drafting, and desktop publishing. He can also help out with setting up computer systems.

Brushy Fork Institute urges Associates to tap the resources that are available to them. Arrangements for assistance from Gary Mahoney or any faculty consultant can be made through the Brushy Fork office (606/986-9341, ext 6838).

Berea College Student Team

by Regina Ragan

The Brushy Fork team comprised of students at Berea College is working on a project to give students the option of both labor and service/leadership transcripts in addition to the academic transcript. For both employment and graduate school purposes, the new transcript program would better serve students by maintaining a broader record of their overall involvement at Berea. The option of expanded transcripts would further promote to everyone on campus the idea that leadership and service are a part of a Berea education. The new transcript program would also encourage students to develop an educational achievement plan that would include academic, labor and service experiences.

Neither the labor nor the service transcripts would be automatically included in a student's

official record, nor would any mention of them be made on academic transcripts. This would protect students who do not want their service involvements or labor experiences released. The labor transcript would, like the academic transcript, be officially prepared by the college. The service and leadership transcript, by contrast, would be initiated by the student.

A memo stating the purpose of the transcript program was distributed to students and faculty last fall. Since then two articles concerning the program have appeared in the Berea College student newspaper, *The Pinnacle*. The proposed transcript program has the endorsement of the Student Association. The Brushy Fork team is now busy lobbying faculty in preparation for a meeting with the Executive Council of the college in March.

Berea students seek record of labor and service.

Lee County, Kentucky

by Sam Cockerham

After the October workshop at Brushy Fork Institute, our group returned to Lee County and commenced regular bi-weekly meetings. We selected a name for ourselves, "Lee County Community Development Committee". Our project was defined as a feasibility survey to identify needs and potential support for a local community center accessible to all segments of our local population.

In mid-December, we held a Saturday afternoon gun-shoot to raise funds for publication and advertising costs.

A midterm pot-luck dinner was held in early January. Staff from Brushy Fork Institute heard our progress report.

We have drafted our survey and set an implementation target date of February 27, 1991. To publicize the survey our committee members will be appearing on a Public Forum broadcast at the local TV station. The committee will also

coordinate groups of high school student volunteers to be situated at various business locations on March 2, 1991. The students will ask passersby to complete surveys. Results of the survey will be compiled and analyzed prior to our April meeting at Brushy Fork. Hopefully, we will have found enough support to justify pursuing this project to fruition in the future.



Martin County, Kentucky

by Jane Fields

Martin County Vision, the team from Martin County, Kentucky, has had a temporary slow-down due to the weather since returning from the December workshop at Brushy Fork Institute.

As readers may recall, Martin County's project is to gather information necessary for planning economic and community development. We designed two surveys, one for teenagers and one for adults. The teen survey has been administered and the data are being tabulated by the computing class at the county high school. High school seniors wanting to earn community service credits will be helping us administer the adult survey. The seniors were to have learned telephone surveying skills at a training session on January 23. Unfortunately, school was not in session that day due to snow, so the session was canceled. It has been rescheduled for January 29 immediately following school at Sheldon Clark High School. Dr. Tom Ilvento from the University of Kentucky and all of the members of Martin County Vision hope to participate in the training session. The actual telephone survey for adult citizens will begin after the training.

Members attending the December workshop in Berea included Terry Spears, Donna

Branham, Zola Howell, Jane Fields, and Gloria Blackburn. It was good to be back in Berea again, and we enjoyed both the trip and the workshop. The storytelling time was especially enjoyable this time. One of our members, Zola Howell, was reluctant to participate in the skit. After being convinced that we needed her desperately, she agreed. She said later that she really did have a great time doing the skit. We may have to watch her—she may decide to give up the banking business for show business!

It was also very interesting to hear from the other groups about their projects. We found that we all had a lot in common and some of our problems were very similar.

One of our members, James Muncy, was hospitalized with heart problems at the time of the workshop. He is doing fine now and has returned to his work at his furniture business and the bank. We wish him the best.

We hope to stay on our schedule to have a completed project by May. We can achieve this if we do not lose any more time this winter. We hope to have a report on our completed survey by the next *Mountain Promise*.

mittees to work on different parts of the project. One group worked on writing a survey to be sent home with school children to find parents who could be included in the directory of speakers and mentors. A second committee developed a survey directed to industries, businesses and professional people. The third and fourth committees compiled lists of industry, business and professional leaders to be contacted for possible inclusion in the directory.

Our next step was a midterm workshop with Lisa Raymer of Brushy Fork. During the workshop we reaffirmed our goals and defined our plans for the next few months. Also, we approved the final drafts of the surveys and decided to distribute them in late January, with the intention of getting the surveys back for editing in February.

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Martin County senior high students take training in telephone survey administration.

Morgan County, Tennessee

by Judy Underwood

The task of deciding on a specific project was a difficult one for our group from Morgan County, Tennessee; however, once that decision was made, we quickly got the project off the ground.

While in the leadership development workshop at Brushy Fork, we chose "Citizens for a Better Morgan County" (CBMC) as our group name, and our project follows that theme for improvement.

Our goal is to compile a directory of speakers and mentors from area industries, professions and training institutes interested in participating in career awareness programs in our county schools.

To get started, we quickly held our first meeting the Monday following the leadership workshop. At the meeting, we split into com-

Morgan Countians aim to interest students in high-tech careers.

We'd like to have our directory published and distributed by the time we return to Berea in April; however, after revising our timeline during the midterm workshop, we settled on having the material ready for publication as our

short term goal.

The gist of the story is that we have a lot of work ahead of us, but we plan to get as much as possible accomplished in the remaining weeks before the April workshop.

Russell County, Virginia

by Tony Dodi

Marketplace Developers from Russell County, Virginia, are moving forward with organizing a Farmers' Market.

A budget has been developed and a grant application for Seedling project funds has been completed. More than four hundred potential farm product producers have been contacted by the local extension office.

A site selection committee has been appointed and is currently in the process of searching for potential sites to house the Farmers' Market.

A list of guidelines for participation in the Market has been established. June 15, 1991, has been selected as the target opening date for the Market.

Producers contacted for new farmers' market in Russell County.

Tazewell County, Virginia

by Mary Lawson

Tazewell County, Virginia, is ON TRAC with an exciting new project. Returning from the October 18-20, 1990, Brushy Fork leadership workshop, eight Tazewell County citizens embarked on a project to create an awareness about the need and urgency for recycling refuse.

The first meeting brought forth a logo and the name of the project, ON TRAC, which was derived from the name we gave our group, Tazewell Recycling Action Committee (TRAC). We've designed a logo and adopted a mascot, TRACASaurus Rex. Rex is currently under construction.

Our first action was to meet with the Tazewell County Recycling Committee, to make them aware of TRAC and to determine how

TRAC could best work with the existing county committee. After learning that the town of Bluefield has a recycling plan in the works, we decided to begin our awareness campaign in the Bluefield area, focusing on the area schools, clubs and churches. A meeting with the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors netted a grant of \$500 for our work.

Now we have set our goals and objectives and drafted an awareness plan to implement in the schools. When TRACASaurus Rex is ready to make its appearance, the meetings in the schools can begin. TRAC members will make the presentations. Then we'll surely be ON TRAC to make Tazewell County a cleaner, healthier, better place to live.



Calhoun Economy Boosters meet with HEAD Loan Fund director.

Calhoun County, West Virginia

by Penny Nichols

The six-month goal of Calhoun Economy Boosters (CEB) is to establish a non-profit revolving loan fund to encourage the start-up of local businesses.

Committees were set up to research existing loan funds, what structure our loan fund would take, and how a loan fund works. Surveys were placed in local newspapers asking various questions concerning what local businesses were needed. Currently, the group is conducting a telephone survey similar to the newspaper

survey concerning problems with businesses and credit.

On January 18, we met with Peter Hille of the Brushy Fork staff and Jann Yankauskas of the Human Economic Appalachian Development Corporation (HEAD). Jann, who is associate director of the HEAD Loan Fund, suggested several ways the CEB could work with HEAD to market loans and provide technical assistance to local businesses. Our next step is to set up a committee to solicit and review loan applications.

McDowell County, West Virginia

information supplied by Ron and Audrey Morris

The McDowell County, West Virginia, team returned to Berea in late November and reported that their after-school tutoring program was up and going strong.

Having accomplished their six-month goal of setting up a tutoring program last fall, the group continues to grow and fully intends to operate the program on an ongoing basis.

Meeting in a duplex house provided by one of the group members,



tutoring sessions are held twice a week. Each two-hour session includes a variety of activities: quiet time, exercise, homework assistance, refreshments and time to socialize. At present nine adult tutors and volunteers operate the program. More volunteers are sought in order to offer the program to more children.

In December, members Vondelere Scott and Billie Cherry made a presentation about the tutoring program at Kimball school. In January the after-school program celebrated the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King. Plans for the upcoming months include a focus on local and national black history in observance of Black History Month in February, an Easter program in March, a field trip in April, and graduation exercises in May. The team hopes to continue the program throughout the summer with an emphasis on reading.

While in Berea for a workshop last fall, member Audrey Mae Morris said of the after-school program, "We're about love. We plan good activities for these children, but really the best thing we can give them is lots of love."

Roane County, West Virginia

by Robert Sergent

The Roane County, West Virginia, group that participated in training at the Brushy Fork Institute in October is on the move! We have moved to name our group, "Roane Countians for a Bright Future." We have also been moving our meetings from place to place in different parts of the county.

Our project is to develop, print and distribute a Directory of Youth Resources to the upper six classes at our schools. We're making progress, although not as rapidly as we had hoped. One local grant has been approved and two others look promising.

Attendance at our mid-term meeting was down due to the illness of Jeanette Atkinson's daughter and the previous commitments of Susan Beard and Don Smith. Rob Pate is on temporary work assignment in Florida (what a burden to have to go to Florida when the snow is flying here!).

At our midterm with Peter Hille, we reviewed our progress on the Directory and worked on a timeline for the next three months. Most of our time during the midterm workshop was spent on leadership methods and problem-solving initiatives.

Midterm meeting held in Roane County.

Bold new service initiative



A piece of federal legislation signed into law by President Bush last November has great potential for positive impact on both community service and the future of young people across the country. The National and Community Service Act of 1990 provides for a variety of volunteer efforts to be performed by teenagers and adults. The Minneapolis Star Tribune called the act the "most important national service legislative initiative since the Peace Corps." Closer to home, Berea College's Student Leadership Director, David Sawyer, said of the NCS Act, "The National Service Act of 1990 has the potential to strengthen the 'internal security of the nation' and to mobilize a civilian corps of dedicated young people who are learning first hand to participate in the problem-solving machinery of our democracy."

There are several components of the legislation. One key provision establishes a corps for young people who have finished or left school. Youth corps members who serve for one year in full-time public service receive GI Bill-style benefits includ-

ing a \$5,000 education stipend. Another part of the legislation brings adult volunteers into public schools that are in need of resources. An additional provision provides funds for setting up programs at schools, colleges and universities to involve students in service to elderly, disabled, homeless, or illiterate community residents. Under this provision students may also work in efforts to improve the environment.

The NCS Act received strong support from lawmakers and others across the political spectrum who seek to promote active public service as an assumed responsibility of democratic citizenship. The act calls for an appropriation of \$63 million the first year, increasing to twice that amount by the third year.

While the NCS Act is hailed as a significant piece of legislation, it also raises serious concerns, according to David Sawyer. "There are two dangers that I see. One, unless community service is integrated intelligently with 'the community'—individuals, agencies, and neighborhood associations—there is a danger that ill-trained, albeit altruistic,

young people may swamp existing agencies and perhaps unwittingly do as much harm as good." Funds provided by the Act, explained David, are designated for programs only. There is no new money for the service-providing agencies to train and monitor large numbers of new volunteers. He continued, "The other danger is the potential lulling effect. We must realize that the National Service Act of 1990 is not a substitute for policy changes that address the underlying causes of our huge common problems. To work in a homeless shelter does not alleviate the causes of homelessness. Service work must be more than charity—it must promote social justice."

When asked about the possible effects of the act on current student leadership and service programs in the region, David said, "If Appalachia's talented school, college, and community leaders will seize this new opportunity, we can help realize the dual goals of both serving the community and developing our finest regional resource—our young people."



Seedling grants blossom

In our last issue of *Mountain Promise* we reported that the first Seedling Grant had been issued to Martin County Vision in Kentucky for their countywide survey. Since then three other county teams have received Brushy Fork Seedling Grants.

Dickenson County, Virginia, featured in this issue, received a grant of \$500 toward the cost of

organizing a leadership conference in the county. The Dickenson County team raised matching funds through a walkathon.

The Tazewell Recycling Action Committee (TRAC), also in Virginia, received a grant of \$500 for their recycling awareness and education program. The team raised matching funds from the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors.

Homegrown Development, Inc., of Wolfe County, Kentucky, has received both a phase I grant of \$500 and a phase II grant of \$1,000 for their beautification work in the downtown area of Campton, the county seat. Readers may recall that phase II grant money must be matched \$2 to \$1. The team has raised over \$3,000 in funds from local sources.

Congratulations, teams!

memo:

to: Brushy Fork Associates
from: Ron Hustedde, Extension Sociologist, U.K. College of Agriculture and U.K. Appalachian Center
re: your participation in community issue gatherings

Brushy Fork Associates in Kentucky are invited to take a leadership role in an innovative public policy discussion series on Eastern Kentucky issues. The community issues gatherings will be organized by teams of local residents including community college staff, county extension agents and Commonwealth Fellows, as well as Brushy Fork Associates.

What are community issues gatherings?

The issues gatherings are a series of fair-minded conversations about local and regional issues among community people. In essence, they are a type of common ground or a new way to deal with controversy in a non-controversial way. These gatherings contain a structure for addressing Eastern Kentucky policy choices in neutral terms. The values of mountain people and the area's rich diversity and traditions are respected.

How will issues gatherings be conducted?

There are five key components which will contribute to the potential success of the forums:

- 1) Trained discussion leaders will remain neutral during the gatherings.
- 2) Participants will be asked to agree to guidelines for discussion which will respect the values of everyone present and which will not lead to a debate, power contest, or lecture.
- 3) Issue booklets are being designed to help aid in open public dialogue. The first Eastern Kentucky issue to be explored is economic development.

4) Each gathering will allow participants to examine several policy choices in neutral terms.

5) Eastern Kentucky residents are involved in designing the gatherings. Focus groups, surveys and personal interviews are being conducted in the region for input about issue booklets and other parts of the gatherings. After these gatherings occur, participants will be asked to evaluate the series in order to make improvements as needed.

How many people will be involved?

Typically, discussion groups will involve about fifteen individuals. But these groups may range in size from four people to an entire community. In a given community it may be beneficial to have several small groups which eventually meet in a large group setting. Group size will depend on the community's needs and the skills of the local discussion leaders.

How can one get training to lead a community issues gathering?

Training sessions will occur at each of the five community colleges in late February or early March.

Why conduct gatherings?

There are several goals. The major goal of the gatherings is to encourage Eastern Kentuckians to discuss policy issues. The gatherings are also designed to improve communication between people of varied social and economic backgrounds. The gatherings will provide up-to-date information about public policy alternatives and will offer participants the possibility of understanding other people's viewpoints and achieving common ground about

policy direction. It is hoped these discussions will serve as models for future policy discussions, build community cohesion and lead to community-designed action. After the economic development issue booklets are released and issues gatherings occur, plans call for discussion of five additional Eastern Kentucky issues over a period of three years. Eventually, the program will expand into the western half of the state.

The public policy project is funded through the Kellogg Foundation. It involves the cooperation of Berea College's Brushy Fork Institute, the U.K. College of Agriculture, U.K. Cooperative Extension Service, U.K. Appalachian Center and five community colleges in Eastern Kentucky.

For more information about training, or to become a part of an area team, contact the person nearest you from the list below. When you call, please identify yourself as a Brushy Fork Associate.

James Goode at Southeast Community College; (606) 589-2145
Tawny Acker Hogg at Hazard Community College; (606) 257-9205
Tom Matijasic at Prestonsburg Community College; (606) 886-3863
Sue Niestroy at Ashland Community College; (606) 329-2999
Ann Zwick at Somerset Community College; (606) 679-8501
Ron Hustedde at U.K.'s College of Agriculture; (606) 257-3186.

on my mind

Second thoughts on project selection

[see also cover story]

by John Stanley
Dickenson County, VA

Although I am very proud of our group's efforts and would not want to diminish the glow of our success, I do have one concern. I wonder if we might be perceived to have failed, despite the successful completion of our six-month goal, if our long-term dream of a community center is not realized.

As we were beginning the project selection process in June, the Brushy Fork staff reminded us of two considerations; one, that the project should be something which could be completed in six months, and two, that the project should entail a real accomplishment. As Carol said, "It really does matter that you actually 'do' something."

During the six months between Berea workshops, our group showed great skill, enthusiasm, and dedication. I, however, experienced occasional doubts; we had selected such an ambitious long-term goal—the establishment of a county-wide

community center facility! I would remind myself (and sometimes others reminded me) that our actual BFI goal was simply to complete the county-wide leadership conference planning retreat. The retreat would then kick-off a post-BFI campaign for the community center, a campaign which could take many years.

What if, heaven forbid, the post-conference steering committee should fade away without creating the center? Can we then still consider our leadership conference planning retreat a success? I would like to think so, considering the five-month effort and all the side benefits that came from it. Hopefully, the community center will be built and my concerns will prove irrelevant. The core-group of people who have remained active in the steering committee are very capable and determined.

I wonder if my feelings about our success would seem less compro-

mised had we selected a different kind of project, one that was more of an end in itself and less a prerequisite for a larger undertaking. I guess my cautionary note to future groups embarking on the project selection process is this—ask yourselves whether or not a particular six-month project would be a satisfying accomplishment in its own right? Or would you feel that the short-term project simply fulfilled a mandatory homework assignment and the real goal lay farther beyond?

Mountain Promise is happy to publish readers' reflections on matters pertaining to leadership and community development, as well as thoughts and suggestions about the Brushy Fork experience.—Ed.

New face at BFI



Donna Morgan has joined the Brushy Fork staff as senior secretary, replacing Penny Thompson who moved to North Carolina. A native of Kingsport, Tennessee, Donna graduated from Berea College with an English degree. Donna lives on an 150-acre farm in Estill County, Kentucky, with her husband and one-year-old son. The Morgans hope to begin construction on a new home this summer, using logs from the cabin that Donna's father grew up in.

SALT Leadership training opportunity

The Southern and Appalachian Leadership Training (SALT) program was founded at Highlander Center in 1974 to provide leadership training for emerging grassroots community leaders who are native to Southern Appalachia or who have a long-term commitment to working in the region.

Four years ago, in answer to requests from community groups in the Deep South, SALT expanded its programs to include Deep South states as well as Appalachian states, bringing together cross-cultural participatory learning that builds on the life experiences of participants.

The SALT fellowship cycle lasts nine months. During the cycle participants attend six weekend workshops. Participants are encouraged to visit other communities struggling with some of the same problems in order to exchange ideas. A small monthly stipend is provided to cover expenses.

The SALT program is multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-generational. It is open to all persons without regard to educational background or occupational experience. To be eligible, participants must be actively working within a local group on social justice issues.

Applications for the 1991 SALT cycle will be available soon. For more information contact: Joyce Dukes, SALT Coordinator, Highlander Center, 1959 Highlander Way, New Market, TN 37820, (615) 933-3443.

Available now free of charge

New resource explains local governance systems

*Ed.'s note : While the **Beyond Voting** handbook may be most useful to Kentuckians, Brushy Fork Associates in other states may also find it very helpful as a guide to exploring the organizational structures and procedures of local governments.*

The Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED) has released a publication entitled *Beyond Voting—A Citizen's Guide to Participating in Local Government*. The 100-page guide is a product of MACED's Kentucky Local Governance Project, whose co-directors are Don Harker and Liz Natter. The project aims to help local governments be more democratic, responsive and accountable to the people they represent.

The guide explains as simply as possible how local government should work under existing Kentucky laws. Written in a question-and-answer format, it provides information on such topics as:

Is a public body allowed to go into closed session at any time?

What kinds of records can I get from a public agency, and how do I obtain them?

How do I bring an issue to the attention of the fiscal court?

Don Harker and Liz Natter decided to write the guide after discussing problems many citizens in counties across Kentucky have had in getting local officials to respond to their concerns and needs. "Those discussions revealed a significant failure of local government to function in a way that serves the public interest and involves the community as a whole," said Liz.

"This guide is just a first step in bringing the necessary reforms to make local government work for all Kentuckians," said Don.

"MACED undertook the Kentucky Local Governance Project as a means of encouraging economic development in the Commonwealth," said Frank Taylor, president of the nonprofit development organization based in Berea. "Development only occurs if a broad base of people have

a stake in designing and benefitting from it."

The guide was produced with financial support from the Mary and Barry Bingham, Sr. Fund and the Charles Lawrence Keith and Clara Miller Foundation, and was printed by the Kentucky Press Association. Initially, the guide will be distributed free of charge. For a copy contact: Kentucky Local Governance Project, 433 Chestnut Street, Berea, KY 40403, (606) 986-2373.

Mountain Promise, the newsletter of the Brushy Fork Institute, is published four times a year in February, May, August, and November.

Articles, reports, clippings, black and white photos, lineart, as well as story suggestions, are welcome. The deadline for submissions is the first day of the month preceding the publication month. Write or call: *Mountain Promise*, attention Lisa Lewis Raymer, BFI, CPO 35, Berea College, Berea, KY 40404; (606) 986-9341 ext. 6838.

Mountain Promise

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