

Associates take the lead during state networking conferences

The four workshops held this spring as part of the State-by-State Networking Project were all interesting, highly participatory and useful! Many who served on committees that designed and made arrangements for the conferences found the planning process to be a networking opportunity itself; "I've already experienced the value of the Brushy Fork network," said one planner. Seventy people all told participated in the four conferences.

Kentucky: Appalachian Culture

One week after the "Blizzard of '93" Kentucky Brushy Fork Associates gathered at Pine Mountain State Park, despite patches of lingering snow. With a full agenda on tap, most participants arrived early, ready for the two-day conference to get underway.

Both applications and implications of the theme, Appalachian Culture, were considered throughout many of the conference activities. Sessions included:

- an exercise designed to help participants think about how to involve diverse constituencies in community projects.
- a review of leadership learning and applications, led by Pat Wagner of Jackson County.
- county team updates
- concurrent discussions of four topics:
 1. Ways to utilize the state network and our collective expertise, led by Betty Jo McKinney of Rockcastle County.
 2. Developing leadership and motivational skills, led by Susan Neff of Wolfe County.
 3. Economic development, led by Scott Barnett from McCreary County.
 4. Preserving and sharing culture, led by Jeanette Shouse, Breathitt County.

Each topic group generated suggestions for a state networking group project. Ultimately the group elected to create a local leadership development project that could be offered at the county level and be led either by Brushy Fork Associates or by others who had participated in the local program once it got going. The project includes developing the curriculum and running a pilot program in Owsley County, with the Owsley County team doing the recruiting and logistics. Associates from other counties will facilitate the sessions. They hope to offer the program subsequently in other counties using the same format of local organizers working with facilitators from other counties.

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Tennessee: Building Bridges

The Tennessee state networking conference was held at Cumberland Mountain State Park in Crossville. Fifteen Tennessee Associates and two non-Associates gathered to share experiences and ideas and make plans for the future.

On Friday evening, the group had dinner and gathered for brief updates on each county's project, followed by storytelling. Saturday morning's activities included:

- a panel discussion of three county projects with an eye to obstacles the groups encountered and how they dealt with them, led by Gene Snowden of Overton County.

continued on next page

a tribute to
Loyal Jones
page 3

three counties
receive Seed-
ling Grants
page 4

1993
leadership
program is
on the move!
page 4

state networking. . . *continued*

- "Building the Network," in which small groups used a survey form filled out by participants to build a flip chart "data base" representing their collective skills and experiences. (Created and led by Hal Flinsch of Jackson County.)

- Small group sessions to brainstorm project ideas, with Associates facilitating each group through prioritizing the lists and picking three to five ideas.

The group settled on creating an annotated directory of Tennessee Associates, with information about each person's skills and experiences. They also hope to include information about key contact people in each county, such as elected officials or directors of organizations, to facilitate multi-county efforts.

Virginia: Get Together

On April 16-17 nine Virginia Associates and three new recruits gathered at the Dickenson Conference Center near Abingdon. Site logistics were handled by J.C. Higginbotham and Kathy Miller of Wythe County. Publicity and registration logistics were handled by "Volunteer Scott County," which used its office as the central mailing and record-keeping location.

The workshop began with introductions led by Kate Wilke of Highland County, who brought a ball of yarn that participants tossed to each other as they introduced themselves, creating a visible network in the middle of the circle. During the workshop the group launched into the following activities:

- a session on fundraising, under the leadership of Anthony Flaccavento of the Coalition for Jobs and the Environment (a citizens group active in Tennessee and Virginia) and Brushy Fork Director Carol Lamm.

- a storytelling session, led by Paul Kuczko, Wise County.

- a session on the skills of networking. Participants mapped, analyzed and set goals for their personal networks.

- a panel on prisons, so that Associates who live in southwest Virginia counties that face the prospect of prison construction in the next decade would understand the issues involved. (Phyllis Deel, with assistance from other Dickenson County Associates, took the lead on recruiting the panel).

- a closing circle in which a ball of different colored yarn was tossed from person to person, representing a changed network. Instead of introducing themselves, each participant spoke of the person to whom they tossed the ball, describing something for which they would call on that person in the future.

As their project, the Virginia group chose to organize a two-track workshop on fundraising for community groups, with an introductory track and a more advanced workshop for organizations actually ready to begin a particular fundraising process. The plan has evolved since then. As it stands, the Virginia network is organizing a workshop to be held November 19-20 at Hungry Mother State Park in Marion, Virginia, for southwest Virginia community organizations. Groups that participate will be eligible to apply for grants for further work in strengthening their organizations' fundraising capacity.

West Virginia: Telling Our Stories

The West Virginia workshop was the largest of the four states and included the most non-Associates. Nine Associates and ten others gathered at the historic Pence Springs Hotel.

After a brief welcome by Logan Rhodes of Clay County and an explanation of Brushy Fork for the benefit of non-Associates, the West Virginia workshop moved directly into their conference activities:

- a session on using the media, led by Kristin Zimet, an active volunteer from the Coalition for Jobs and the Environment. Each participant took an active part in role play, discussion and reflection about the variety of media and how to get an organization's story out.

- a storytelling session led by local historian and entertainer Jim Costa, who also displayed old tools from his large collection.

- a session on conflict resolution with Calhoun County Associate Bob Wilson taking the lead.

- a workshop on personal goal setting. Under the leadership of Jim Bragg of Summers County, participants wrote their own obituaries, reflected on the messages for their lives and set goals for different areas of life.

- a closing activity in which participants wrote notes about each person's special gifts on posterboard taped to the person's back—a meaningful souvenir of an inspiring workshop.

The group decided on two projects, one of which is planning next year's workshop. The other West Virginia team project is to get groups of children "off the streets and into the woods!" The group will identify currently available nature experiences for children (such as state park programs) and arrange for school classes, scouts, youth programs, etc. to visit these sites.

Loyal Jones retires after years of service to the Appalachian region

A tribute to a teacher and friend

by Norman Parsons

I first met Loyal Jones when, as a student at Berea College, I enrolled in an Appalachian Studies class. I took this class just to meet Loyal. I had known of him for several years through his work with The Council of Southern Mountains.

I was not disappointed. In fact, I received far more than I had hoped. In Loyal Jones I found an intriguing person with a deeply-felt regard for his subject—Appalachia. As if Loyal had put the material and students together in a bag and had given a good shake, the class produced students with respect for the region and its history and their teacher.

Scholar, author and humorist, Loyal Jones has meant much to Berea College and to the Berea community, but most importantly, to Appalachia. Having spent many hours and years both studying and sharing his knowledge of the region, Loyal has given generously from his treasure trove of stories, information, understanding and perspective.

I feel Loyal's greatest gift is his willingness to share the culture of the region. I especially appreciate his love for traditional Appalachian music and humor. He has taught that it's okay to laugh and sing, that humor and music are our heritage, tools for both celebrating and coping with the situations we find ourselves in.



Loyal Jones, perhaps best known by Brushy Fork Associates as official storytelling host, retires this year from his position as director of Berea College's Appalachian Center.

Loyal has also shown us the importance of making commitments in the region. He has helped us understand that we all have a responsibility to take part in our communities; that our learning time at Berea is valuable, but taking our skills and knowledge home and putting them to use is more important.

In his work with Brushy Fork Institute Loyal leads storytelling sessions for many of the leadership development workshops. In a warm, relaxed manner Loyal encourages everyone to share stories from their lives, bringing out the natural storyteller in many of us.

So, Loyal, have you heard a good story lately?

Norman Parsons is a social worker in McCreary County, Kentucky. He is also a Brushy Fork Associate Facilitator, a Sunday School teacher and a children's sports league coach.

Leading Edge sees Brushy Fork active in education reform

Part of the strategic plan established by Brushy Fork staff and Advisory Board members last year was to increase Brushy Fork's outreach through collaborative projects with other organizations in the region. Brushy Fork staff adopted the name "Leading Edge" for this program. Here is a brief update on what's been happening on that front.

Lisa Lewis Raymer has been working closely over the past few months with The Partnership for Kentucky School Reform on a directory of training resources and print and media materials in support of the Kentucky Education Reform Act. The directory will be distributed to school districts for use in professional development planning.

As part of another project in support of KERA Peter Hille facilitated a training session with the

Kentucky Region 6 Service Center. A result of the one-day workshop at which area trainers gathered is a directory of school-based decision making training to be published in early fall.

Lisa led a session for Appalachian Ministries Educational Resource Center seminar participants, many of whom were from outside the Appalachian region. They explored cultural differences and the role of personality styles in working with people.

Personality styles and learning/teaching styles were the themes for professional development workshops that Carol, Peter and Lisa facilitated for groups of educators in Kentucky, in collaboration with the Kentucky Science and Technology Council and the Partnership for Reform Initiatives in Science and Mathematics.

Three teams awarded Seedling Grants

It has been some time since we reported Seedling Grant activity; here's an update. Three teams received start-up grants of \$1,000 each over the fall and winter, and a fourth team was just recently approved for an additional grant of \$4,800.

Visitors to Knott County, Kentucky, are greeted by landscaped welcome signs at two entrances to the county, the project for which the Knott County team received a start-up grant in October. The Knott Countians were very enthusiastic promoters of their project and drummed up donations of labor as well as financial support. As you may recall from the Fall 1992 issue of *Mountain Promise*, the welcome signs consist of eight foot high concrete letters with marble chipped fronts. Wildflowers are planted around the letters.

Bland County, Virginia, received a start-up grant in November to compile and print a guidebook to the county. The Bland County team secured matching funds through doughnut sales and a sizeable donation from a local industry. Their project is still in progress.

Concerned that emergency service vehicles have difficulty responding to calls in rural areas with unmarked roads, the Leslie Area Renovation Committee (LARC) in Kentucky is erecting road signs in the county. The team received a start-up grant in February after gaining approval for a \$10,000 grant from the Kentucky Department of Transportation. While the DOT funds have not yet been received, LARC is proceeding to have signs made and erected with the help of fire departments and civic groups.

What began as the Volunteer Awareness Program in April of 1991 is today Volunteer Scott County, a countywide agency housed in the courthouse in Gate City, the county seat. The agency serves to match volunteers with the needs of nonprofits and service providers. A Seedling Grant of \$4,800 will enable the program to pay a part-time coordinator.

Congratulations, teams!

Leadership Program to begin in November

This year's first and only six-month cycle of Brushy Fork's Leadership Development Program is scheduled to begin with a three-day workshop from November 4-6. Counties participating in this cycle are Magoffin County, Kentucky, Menifee County, Kentucky, and Lincoln County, West Virginia. A team of Berea College students will also participate.

Recruitment of participants is underway in each of these counties. If you know a resident of one of these counties who might be interested in the program, have them contact their county extension offices or public library; or they may call Brushy Fork for an application.

Participation of the Kentucky teams is made possible through a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission. The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation is funding the West Virginia team.

Mountain Promise

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