



The Center for Excellence in Learning Through Service (CELTs) at Berea College educates students for leadership in service and social justice through promotion and coordination of academic service-learning and student-led community service. CELTs service-learning staff work closely with faculty, students and community organizations to develop service-learning and community-based research collaborations that provide students with opportunities to apply academic learning and critical thinking skills to community issues and needs.



## Learn and Serve America Community-Based Research Innovation Grant: Energy and Empowerment in an Appalachian County



In 2007, CELTs was awarded a 3-year Learn and Serve America (LSA) Community-Based Research (CBR) Innovation Grant, to fund CBR collaborations, focused on issues of energy and empowerment. CELTs service-learning staff facilitate the development of CBR partnerships among faculty, students and community organizations, communication among CBR project participants, and the funding of CBR projects through the LSA grant.



### Code-Approved Natural Building Projects

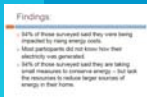


Berea College Sustainability and Environmental Studies (SENS) Independent Majors Erin Finsel, '11, and Phil Hawn, '09, worked with HomeGrown HideAways to research natural building techniques and the code-approval process. This research led to their participation in the design and construction of the first code-approved Earthbag home in Kentucky and a code-approved Strawbale/Cob art studio during the summer of 2008.

Dr. Richard Olson was the faculty sponsor of this project. HomeGrown HideAways continues to offer community workshops to share what they learned in the code-approval process along with natural building techniques in general.



### Madison County Energy Survey



Beth Bissmeyer, '09, an English Major and Appalachian Studies Minor, worked with Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC) to develop and administer a survey about energy in Madison County. Dr. Meta Mendel-Reyes was the faculty sponsor for this project. Beth and KFTC staff and volunteers conducted the survey in Berea and Richmond. The survey looked at the impact of rising electricity costs, conservation efforts, and energy literacy. As an incentive to participate in the survey, individuals received compact fluorescent light bulbs.

Beth and KFTC staff and volunteers conducted 259 surveys and created a presentation as well as a report compiling the information. Some surveys were conducted by going door-to-door and others were conducted via tabling at local grocery stores and festivals. They found that most participants were impacted by rising energy costs, are interested in learning more ways to save energy, and are unaware that coal provides the majority of electricity in Kentucky.

As a result, the KFTC energy work team, in collaboration with the Energy and Empowerment planning committee, continues to connect survey participants with groups seeking to disseminate energy conservation information. For example, survey participants received invitations to a Sustainable Berea workshop on energy efficiency.



### Grant-Writing with Energy in Mind

During January 2009, students in ENG 227 Grant-Writing, a Short Term course taught by Dr. Kate Egerton, partnered with Sustainable Berea and Madison County Home Energy Improvement Program, Inc.

The students in this service-learning course learned a great deal about writing for non-profit organizations. They wrote portions of grants for each of the two organizations, which in turn gained temporary access to a foundation directory. They also researched grants for which the organizations were eligible.



### Survey of Health Professionals: Impacts of Coal- Fired Power Plants



Students who took HLT 210 Health in Appalachia in Spring 2009, taught by Dr. Kris Wright, partnered with the Kentucky Environmental Foundation (KEF) and Judith Weckman, of the Berea College Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. In addition to studying various perspectives about health in the region, students created and administered a survey for health professionals about their knowledge of health impacts from coal-fired power plants.

After the survey concluded, students invited participants to a forum to discuss the results.

This project supports the work that KEF and a coalition of other groups in the region are doing to propose alternatives to a new coal-fired power plant in Clark County, Kentucky.



### Transition Town Berea

Transition Town Berea began as a project of the community non-profit Sustainable Berea. In Fall 2008, Sustainable Berea partnered with SENS labor students and five academic programs and departments:

- African and African American Studies
- Appalachian Studies
- Peace and Social Justice Studies
- Sustainability and Environmental Studies (SENS)
- Women's Studies

The goal of Transition Town Berea is to increase the ability of the City of Berea to deal with economic uncertainty, peak oil, and climate change. The approach for this goal was developing a Transition Plan to increase the city's resilience—its ability to withstand shocks from the outside—particularly in the areas of energy, food, and economy.

The Transition Plan for Berea is modeled after the Kinsale (Ireland) Energy Descent Action Plan and was developed according to The Transition Handbook by Rob Hopkins. The Berea College students, who were enrolled in one of five collaborating capstone courses, facilitated discussions at public meetings. Notes from these meetings and students' research were synthesized into a set of 36 recommendations for the City of Berea. Students presented these recommendations, along with their visions of Berea in 2025, to 85 people at a public meeting on November 12, after which the public was asked to comment. In addition, each attendant received three evaluation sheets to provide written comments on the recommendations and to suggest additional actions. This feedback was compiled and discussed at another student-led public meeting on November 20, during which attendants also prioritized the recommendations.

Along with the 36 recommendations, the group also planned a year-long series of Re-Skilling workshops. "Re-Skilling" refers to regaining the skills our grandparents had and updating them for advances in knowledge and technology. These workshops aim to increase community resilience by teaching citizens practical skills for reducing their energy use, installing alternative energy sources, growing and storing food, and supporting a local economy. In addition to coordinating workshops, SENS labor students worked with members of Sustainable Berea to create a calendar with corresponding information for each of the monthly Re-Skilling workshops hosted by the organization.

The City of Berea has been designated as an official Transition Town. Berea joins 133 communities worldwide in this designation, and is only the thirteenth Transition Town in the US and the first in Kentucky.



### Energy and Empowerment Coalition Support



### E&E Gatherings

E&E provides opportunities for representatives of over 20 organizations working on energy issues to come together to network, build collaborative projects, and have strategic conversations.



### E&E List-serve

After the first E&E gathering in February 2008, it was clear that more networking tools were needed. The E&E list-serve currently connects over 150 people, and members share news articles about energy, local workshop and event information, and coalition updates.



### E&E Planning

The E&E Project invites feedback from groups involved. A planning committee helps shape gatherings and intentionally looks for opportunities for collaboration.