



# 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

 **GROW**  
APPALACHIA

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BEREA COLLEGE





# REFLECTIONS FROM 2016

The 2016 growing season proved to be the most challenging yet. In the Spring, many growers suffered from severe rainfall, bringing flooding and disease issues to their gardens. The season was rounded out with unusually warm temperatures and a serious drought in the late Summer and early Fall. Some of our partner sites experienced wildfire, while many states in central Appalachia burned for weeks. Truly, the 2016 growing season tested our gardeners and site coordinators, pushing the envelope on their patience and desire to grow food for their families. Remarkably, despite such intense and extreme conditions, Grow Appalachia families produced more than 647,563 pounds of food this year. Most of that produce is consumed at home, preserved for the winter months or shared with neighbors, friends and family.

In the vein of reflection, we are happy to share that for the first time since the beginning of the program, Grow Appalachia will soon have the opportunity to decipher from a personal, qualitative standpoint, how the program has impacted our growers (past and present) in the region. With the assistance of a graduate student from Pennsylvania State University, who spent time this summer visiting three Grow Appalachia partner sites as part of her dissertation research, surveys were distributed to all partner sites. The data collected from these surveys will serve as a foundation for how Grow Appalachia can seek improvement in providing resources, refining workshop content, properly emphasizing the use of organic practices, and ensuring families graduate out of the program sufficiently equipped with the ability to continue gardening beyond the aid of Grow Appalachia. The results will also evaluate the program's strengths in order to continue driving the basic mission of helping as many Appalachian families grow as much of their own food as possible. Keep in touch to hear our results!



# NEWS FROM 2016

## USDA NIFA Community Foods Project Grant

Grow Appalachia was selected as one of 33 recipients for funding from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture Community Foods Project Competitive Grants Program. The Community Foods Project (CFP) Competitive Grants Program funds projects in order to "foster self-sustaining solutions that help make healthy foods available to families living in low-income neighborhoods." The primary goals of CFP are "meeting the food needs of low-income individuals; promoting comprehensive responses to local food access, farm and nutrition issues, and addressing state, local, and neighborhood food and agricultural needs such as infrastructure, long-term planning, and marketing that benefits agricultural producers and low income producers."



Grow Appalachia's 3-year, \$375,000 grant will supply equipment, market training, and infrastructure to install five commercial kitchens in the southeast Kentucky region. Grow Appalachia is partnering with already-established Grow Appalachia sites in order to maximize the amount of available leveraged resources: Red Bird Mission, Cowan Community Center, the Laurel County African American Heritage Center, Hindman Settlement School, and Pine Mountain Settlement School. By the end of the grant, 493 families in five counties of southeastern Kentucky will have access to state-of-the-art commercial kitchens, all the while having received workshops on gardening maintenance, heart-healthy cooking, food preservation, and other food production/gardening topics. Each family impacted by this grant will become more self-sufficient and food secure, carrying their obtained skills with them for years to come.



## NRCS Funded Projects

Since 2012, the Natural Resource Conservation Service has been a steadfast and supportive ally to Grow Appalachia, primarily on the technical components of the program. During the 2017 growing season, Grow Appalachia's Technical Director Mark Walden will be spearheading two NRCS-funded projects that will be bringing significant agricultural resources into the eastern Kentucky region. As part of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Mark will be delivering 40 high tunnel contracts to new producers for the duration of the project period, which will end in 2019 (10 contracts in year 1 and 15 the following two years). Additionally, Mark will be working with area producers and farmers to develop and implement Conservation Plans of Operation (CPO), in conjunction with the NRCS Seasonal High Tunnel initiative. These CPO plans will benefit current high tunnel customers as they receive guidance and input on best practices for maintaining their seasonal high tunnels efficiently and effectively. Lastly, Mark is working on obtaining his Technical Service Provider (TSP) Certification. Grow Appalachia is looking forward to the expanding movement of food production and conservation in the years to come.



**IN 2016, GROW APPALACHIA DISTRIBUTED NEARLY \$611,000 IN RESOURCES TO FAMILIES IN CENTRAL APPALACHIA.**







Grow Appalachia isn't just for "Grown-Ups". From settlement schools to alternative learning institutions to camps for girls and day cares, many of our partner sites' missions are specifically geared toward working with youth in their communities. Connecting kids to their role in the food cycle comes as a natural fit alongside the many other great resources and services partner sites already provide.

In last year's annual report, we highlighted Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) for their innovative work with kids with special needs. This year, they've taken their work a step further by creating a mentoring program where special needs high school students teach local middle school students the basics about gardening. We're thrilled to see ASD putting into practice the model of peer-led learning that makes Grow Appalachia sites so successful.

Teens at Rural Resources faced unique challenges with drought this year. A month with no rain and the high cost of watering crops with city water led to some tough times for these Tennessee teens. In response, leaders at Rural Resources led a class on rain barrels where each teen designed their own barrel. They were able to take the finished product home with them. In the future, these teens will have access to water for their own gardens when it rains and even days later, while doing their part to conserve local resources in times of drought.

Medical students at Lincoln Memorial University worked with local 3rd and 4th graders in the Heart to Heart program. In one session, the medical students showed the elementary school students how ingredients for salsa are grown and then used those same fresh ingredients to make their own salsa together. Up-and-coming doctors encouraging healthy living and eating for the next generation sounds like a win-win!

Grow Appalachia participants at Build It Up East Tennessee voiced that their kids were the reason they started gardening. Gardener Cassie Lane and her partner are raising five kids in Johnson City. They're looking forward to a future of homesteading, but for now, their goal is providing for their family and teaching their kids the life skills to provide for themselves in the healthiest ways possible. Cassie says "Every night the kids are asking "is this our food? Did we grow this?" They're beyond excited to eat what they've grown. They love the harvesting part." Homeschooling mother of seven, Holly Melendez, also cited her kids as her motivation for growing. "The kids were primary. That's why we were so involved. We want them to learn this. They did a lot of the work. They helped measure and lay out the beds, they raked to make paths between the beds. We incorporated the academic part into it, too, for practical application of what they learn. If they do it, they're more likely to retain it and understand it fully."

Shae Keane, Youth Programming Coordinator at Build It Up East Tennessee, talks about intentionality in working with kids. In her words, Shae "sows seeds of purpose" into her stories and programs, creating characters that challenge traditional roles and telling stories that inspire all kids to be responsible and proud of their role in the food cycle. She emphasizes how interacting with nature and growing food fosters confidence and independence for kids, especially those from low-income backgrounds. "Seeing something grow can feel powerful. It's something kids can do on their own, without much adult supervision and permission."

We're proud of the work our youth-centered partner sites are doing; we believe that kids that are interested in growing and eating healthy food will grow into adults that pass that passion on to the next generations, and so on. As Michelle Morgan from Appalachian Sustainable Development mentions in her blog on team-teaching, "We are creating interest in youth to promote demand by adults in the future."



The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) at Berea College started with a "Strengthening Communities: Federal Work Study and the Summer Food Service Program" meeting on May 4, 2015.

Around the same time local Berea community member and Grow Appalachia Partner Site Coordinator Martina Leforce was working to try to bring the Summer Food Service Program to a housing authority neighborhood where her mother, Linda, raises three young grandchildren. Just feet from Linda's front porch stands a statue commemorating the property as very spot where John G. Fee—the founder of Berea College—was first invited to minister. This landmark served as an inspiration for Martina to meet with David Cooke at Berea College, to try to figure out how to bring SFSP meals to the families in her area. In the fall of 2015 Martina officially joined the Grow Appalachia team to develop a community-college partnership which would bring the program to not only her mother's neighborhood, but the entire town of Berea.

In July of 2015, AmeriCorps VISTA member Alix Burke came on board. She and Martina formed a team to jumpstart the process of developing SFSP in Berea. Months of planning and preparation included research, extensive training, coordinating with statewide SFSP agents at the Kentucky Department of Education, forming partnerships with both on and off-campus organizations, meeting with Mountaineer Dining Services to plan meal cycles, and scoping out locations throughout Berea to determine where to serve meals.

While the USDA has operated the Summer Food Service Program nationwide for decades—and despite the fact that 22.4% of Kentucky children experience food insecurity—Kentucky currently has one of the lowest rates of SFSP child attendance, with only 1 in 10 children making it to an SFSP site. Our goal was to not only address food insecurity in our town—where over 30% of children live in poverty—but to serve as a model for college and university communities across the state. As the **first college or university in the state of Kentucky** to ever sponsor and administer a community-based SFSP, we had a lot to figure out in preparation for the summer.

From the day that Berea public schools let out, until school started once again, we provided more than 13,000 meals (both breakfast and lunch), as well as offered a variety of kid-friendly educational programs, at six sites which included: our public library, a centrally located park pavilion, a public pool, and two indoor church sites that featured playgrounds and gardens.



**20+**  
**COMMUNITY**  
**PARTNERS**



**\$44,519**  
**MEAL COSTS**  
**SAVINGS FOR**  
**BEREA FAMILIES**



**13,880**  
**MEALS**  
**SERVED**



# THE SOAR LOAN FUND



The SOAR (Shaping Our Appalachian Region) Loan Fund, a partner project with Kentucky Highlands Investment Corp and Kentucky's Governor's Office of Ag Policy, is a financial resource that provides low-interest loans to assist small-scale producers and growers in scaling up their operations towards commercial-level production. Additionally, the Loan Fund works to support and educate growers in order to develop a stronger local food system in eastern and southern Kentucky. Most food-related producers, including beekeepers, cut flower producers, vegetable farmers, and many others, are eligible for SOAR Loan funding. Grow Appalachia consults with interested growers to address their specific needs and goals. Each producer receives a detailed plan that is exactly what is needed to meet their specific goals.

One recipient of the SOAR Loan Fund is not a stranger to the Grow Appalachia program, nor to making an impact in their community. Back in 2014, the Laurel County African American Heritage Center, founded in 2004 by Wayne Riley, acquired a house that had been donated by the city of London. The house, still in good condition at the time of receipt by center, was scheduled to be torn down to make room for an expansion at the local Community Center. The Heritage Center received a \$7,500 SOAR Small Production Fund loan to help relocate the house to a location next to the Center. The house was moved successfully to its current location next to the Laurel County African American Heritage Center. Plans are currently under way for renovating the house and converting it into a commercial kitchen. The kitchen will include processing space for canning and preserving produce, as well as state-of-the-art equipment and appliances to accommodate other cooking and production-related needs. The commercial kitchen will be a valuable commodity to the Grow Appalachia program in the county, also coordinated by Riley. In 2016 Laurel County African American Heritage Center Grow Appalachia participants harvested almost 40,000 pounds of produce, partly from a 7 acre community garden and five high tunnels. The Center's Grow Appalachia program also maintains a small apiary and will incorporate laying hens and eggs as part of their program for 2017.



**PRESTON JONES**  
SOAR LOAN FUND RECIPIENT

Preston is another Grow Appalachia SOAR Loan Fund farmer. Currently coordinating the Grow Appalachia program at Pine Mountain Settlement School in Harlan County, Kentucky, Preston also owns a 13 acre farm in the county, producing a mix of vegetables and sorghum. With their \$7,500 SOAR loan, the Jones' family will expand their vegetable and sorghum production and additionally grow mushrooms and other medicinal plants. To accommodate this increase, the Jones's purchased a walk-behind tractor and supplementary equipment was purchased. Stories like these continue the momentum of the expanding and accelerating food movement occurring in the central Appalachian region.



**WOODY  
HARTLOVE**

**PINE MOUNTAIN  
SETTLEMENT SCHOOL  
MARKET GROWER**



**GROWING FOR MARKET**

For the past 3 years, Grow Appalachia participants have been selling their excess produce at Farmers Markets across the region. Some have even started growing specifically for market, making supporting their local foods economy a feature of their strategic gardening plan.

One such grower in Harlan County, Kentucky, Woody Hartlove, has found his calling in the local foods economy. For Woody, learning to grow organic and plan his garden from Grow Appalachia workshops at Pine Mountain Settlement School has influenced his future work. "Within 5 years, I want to have chickens, rabbits, cows, goats, and bees. Between Grow Appalachia and our extension office workshops, it's getting me all right on track. With the influence of the Grow Appalachia program and all the marketing stuff, that got me thinking: 'I love doing this. I need a job. I can go full production; might as well make some money at it, too.'"

Another tenet of Woody's 5-year plan is to be able to sell everything that he grows and processes. To ensure that, he'll be getting his Homebased Processing and Microprocessing certifications. Woody is also looking forward to the opportunity to work with the commercial kitchen project at Pine Mountain Settlement School. Funding for the commercial kitchen, as well as equipment and market-based training and workshops, was written into Grow Appalachia's USDA Community Foods Project grant. (*see page 2 for more details on the CFP grant!*)

Woody's work isn't just centered on improving his own economic situation; he's working with other leaders in the community to start a registered farmers market in Harlan County. "It's something we need around here. A lot of folks are wanting a farmers market. We're still in the planning process and putting it all together, but it's coming along nice. Our grand opening is June 10th."

Woody's story is one of hundreds across Central Appalachia. When Grow Appalachia gardeners grow enough for their families and friends, more and more are taking their excess produce to market. Check out the numbers below to see how Grow Appalachia market gardeners measure up.



**IN 2016, GROW APPALACHIA WORKED WITH 406 MARKET GROWERS  
WHO SOLD MORE THAN \$61,000 OF PRODUCE AT THEIR LOCAL MARKETS.**



# GREENHOUSE17- VALUE IN VALUE-ADDED

Greenhouse 17 (GH17) is a 40-acre domestic violence emergency shelter and farm that has become a healing oasis to thousands of women and families since 2004. Formerly known as the Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program, Greenhouse 17 is a Grow Appalachia “Success Story” for its innovative value-added strategies and therapeutic farm stipend program for survivors. The farm, a multi-acre community garden with six high tunnels, was started in 2012 when GH17 became a partner site with Grow Appalachia. One of the most successful components of the farm is the cut flower enterprise, which grew into a CSA that serves the greater Lexington area. This year, GH17 generated more than \$25,000 just in CSA and other cut flower-related sales.

One survivor, Debra, started out participating in the stipend program in her time at GH17 and was then hired on as the assistant florist for the CSA. “The farm helped a lot to build back up my self-esteem. People always asked if I’d done this before because I was so good at it. I did all the flowers in the house for each table. It helped build me back up from being torn down for so many years. I didn’t think I could do work like that—it is hard work. You don’t realize it but it’s also rewarding.”

Another survivor, Elizabeth, agreed. “I did everything while I was here. Mulching, planting, seeding, picking, mowing up in between all the aisles. I know what the word ‘work’ means now. Because no matter what you do, that job is never done if you want to have vegetables to eat. They do not grow by themselves, especially at the speed you might want them to grow at.” For Elizabeth, Greenhouse 17 and her work on the farm set her and her son on the path to a better, healthier future. “After he got out there and worked, too, he complains a whole lot less about eating his fruits and vegetables now that he knows what it takes to get from the ground, from nothing, to the plate. At first, I didn’t do [the stipend program] for the experience or anything. I did it because I needed the money. But you know what? It was more of a healing experience than anything. That fresh air and being able to actually see things grow is a miracle. Right now, even though we don’t have everything we want, we’re very happy with what we’ve got, and every day is a blessing.”

Debra became a mentor to other women in the stipend program at GH17, building trusting, patient, and loving relationships with women in a way she’d never experienced before. Her work on the farm was vital to her healing process. “Seeing it go into the ground, growing, harvesting it, putting it together, being trusted to teach classes on it, it amounts to building yourself up and loving yourself. It helped me love myself. It’s what I love the best about this house. It’s given me my life back; it’s given me myself back.”

In addition to all the other services Greenhouse 17 provides—from job and housing placement to navigating the legal system and counseling—the shelter has created a “Handmade By Survivors” line of Kentucky Proud body care products, processed, manufactured, and packaged in the on-site commercial kitchen by GH17 residents. 100% of the proceeds from “Handmade By Survivors” purchases go directly to support the shelter and its services. To us, you really can’t add much more value than that.



**DEBRA**  
ASSISTANT  
FLORIST  
& SURVIVOR

“Us women, a lot of us are so closed up when we get here. Then we’re like the flowers, we open up and bloom.”



## WOMEN IN THE FOOD MOVEMENT

*“We are either going to have a future where women lead the way to make peace with the Earth or we are not going to have a human future at all.” -Vandana Shiva*

If building soil health, growing organically, and sharing fresh food with our neighbors is “making peace with the Earth”, Grow Appalachia is certainly working to secure the future. Although leaders of all kinds are hard at work at Grow Appalachia partner sites throughout Central Appalachia, we couldn’t help but notice the number of women leaders we work with!

As always, we are grateful for the women and men leaders of all ages involved in Grow Appalachia. We want to take the opportunity in this report to highlight some of the young women leaders we work with:

**Lexy Close**, Partner Site Coordinator at Build It Up East Tennessee, on stereotypes and working with women in agriculture: “Historically, women have been the main drivers of agriculture, so it’s weird in this day and age that when we think of farmers, we think of men. Maybe men grow the cash crops, but it’s always been the job of women to feed the family. Women have always been the driving force behind food. In the local food system here, in East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia, where I’m doing a lot with agriculture, I work primarily with women in leadership roles. It’s awesome. I feel like we’re moving stuff along. It’s a women-led movement here and I don’t know why and I don’t really care; we’re doing it and it’s awesome! It’s wonderful energy.”

**Christina Lane**, Partner Site Coordinator at GreenHouse 17, on her role as a woman leader and working with other women: “I learn from other women, and here especially, clients. And I’m always learning something new about myself every day, trying to improve myself and how I carry myself in what I learn, how to continue to be a voice for others. I’m consistent in what I do—I believe in consistency and speaking my truth. I will always do that. But we as women also have to band together, be with different, diverse groups of women and support each other. And just keep on fighting the good fight.”

**Laura Gregory**, Partner Site Coordinator at Wolfe County Grow Appalachia, on her role in the Wolfe County community and food movement: “I don’t necessarily consider myself a leader. Or think about it in those terms: ‘woman leader in the food movement in Appalachia.’ I just feel like a passionate gardener and a coordinator. I’m facilitating learning. I’ve always thought that touching, affecting, inspiring one life is better than none. In my observation, and for whatever reason, women are often the ones taking the majority of the garden responsibility in the family. There are strong women in Appalachia. I am passionate about the work I do because I am helping my community to become more self-sufficient and healthy and aware of where their food comes from. These are aspects of my own life that I value tremendously; to see those values bring joy to others is invaluable. People are learning to grow food or switching to organic here for the first time. They are walking out to their yard and picking something that they put into dinner. They are opening a jar of tomatoes in January for a wintertime meal. They are smiling and proud as they are nourished by their soil. They are more food secure in our rural, food desert than ever before. It tickles me pink to think I had anything to do with those joyous moments.”



**58% OF GROW APPALACHIA'S EMPLOYED  
SITE COORDINATORS IN 2016 WERE FEMALE.**



**“IT’S A WOMEN-LED MOVEMENT HERE AND I DON’T KNOW WHY  
AND I DON’T REALLY CARE; WE’RE DOING IT AND IT’S AWESOME!”**

**LEXY CLOSE, BUILD-IT-UP COORDINATOR**







## INNOVATIVE GARDEN PRODUCTS

Grow Appalachia isn't just for human food, these days! One innovative Grow Appalachia gardener, Angie Sheek, in Johnson City, TN, uses ingredients like parsley, holy basil, and mint from her garden, as well as meat and eggs from the chickens she raises, to make her farmers market-famous homemade dog treats! "We try to put as much of our own stuff in there, as natural, as possible. We use no chemicals, no preservatives. As much as we can grow ourselves, we do. We want every body to be healthy!"



**515 WORKSHOPS  
TAUGHT IN 6 STATES  
IN CENTRAL  
APPALACHIA IN 2016**



## FOOD CULTURE

Grow Appalachia's basic mission continues to be to help as many Appalachian families grow as much of their own food as possible. Historically, Appalachian families have been growing their own food as long as people have lived in these mountains, and that's a LONG time. As one Grow Appalachia gardener in Harlan County, Kentucky said, "Now, I'm a farmer. I like it! It's getting back to the old ways. The Pine Mountain Settlement School Grow Appalachia program gets us all in touch with the way it used to be here."

Employment and economic opportunity, along with commercial growing practices and increased access to processed and fast foods have their place in Appalachia's recent history and have had significant impact. They've led to improved financial wealth for some in the region and represent advances in road systems, technology, and greater opportunities for both men and women in the workforce. However, changes in available industry in Appalachia, along with poor health and soil quality as unintended consequences of those advancements, have led to a growing need for food solutions in the region.

Since the beginning, Grow Appalachia has been committed to providing an education that goes beyond simply teaching people how to grow their own food. Each Grow Appalachia partner site offers six workshops annually to their participants and their communities that address those food solutions in culturally relevant ways. Four of those workshops—garden planning, garden planting, garden maintenance, and cold weather/off-season gardening—deal with the technical specifics of growing an organic garden in Appalachia. They feature information on climate and which plants grow best in which seasons, how to tend them as they grow, without using harsh chemicals or unsafe practices, soil quality and how to improve it and work with it in ways that keep it healthy and fertile for future generations, and how to plan and prepare for next year's garden and the seasons ahead.

The remaining two workshops, heart-healthy cooking and food preservation, on the other hand, answer the sometimes-elusive "Now what?" question that comes after the produce is harvested and during the portion of the year when folks aren't actively growing food. These workshops teach folks how to cook their garden produce in heart-healthy, culturally relevant ways, while imparting safe food preservation knowledge about methods like canning, dehydrating, or freezing, to ensure that garden-grown produce can be enjoyed long after the

gardens have been put to bed for the winter. One Grow Appalachian participant with Build It Up East Tennessee, Mary Beth Wooten, actually made the connection that led to her job as a farmers market program assistant during one of their canning workshops. Mary Beth and her husband were able to find friends and a community to call home through their involvement with Grow Appalachia and the local farmers markets. "We got to know people and got involved in the community. Build It Up opened up all these doors—it gets people interested, it spreads, we know all the farmers, all of our friends have started gardens or tried something!"

People, and especially Appalachian people, have been coming together around food for as long as we've been growing and eating it. Community meals, potluck-style gatherings at churches, weddings, and funerals, community bean-snapping and corn-shucking—there's a reason food and community are so closely related here in these mountains. We're especially proud that these workshops give families, friends, and neighbors a reason to come together and bond over food. Ultimately, we believe that giving families the tools and knowledge to make healthier choices about what and how they eat, as well as how they make their living and get their exercise, is a viable solution to promoting strong, self-reliant, sustainable, and secure Appalachian communities.



*Photo: Abby Huggins*

The Appalachian Food Summit, a weekend-long food-centered conference first inaugurated in 2014 at Hindman Settlement School, celebrates the expanding movement of Appalachian food and food culture, bringing in chefs, scholars, authors, writers, artists, professors, farmers, and all other food enthusiasts together for conversation, presentations, and storytelling, honoring the past and looking to the future. It may actually be a bit of a stretch to call it a "conference".

Grow Appalachia became the fiscal sponsor of the Food Summit in 2015, and Berea College was selected to be the host location for the 2016 Summit. The spirit and reputation of Berea College, though, was not the only component of the Summit that created the lively atmosphere; rather, it was the sense of community and commonality that made all attendees feel welcomed. One writer reflects, "The gathering was much more than just food. It was about sharing a sense of place: rooted and diverse, traditional and dynamic, beautiful and complicated. It was about a community of folks doing important work in all the places they come from, through food and beyond food."

Another attendee writes, "I...attended the Brewers, Farmers, and Tourists: Appalachian Beer in the 21st Century. It was an inspiring talk for me as I ponder my potentially grand future in agriculture...For me, the future is uncertain, but the information is more available and obtainable after attending the Appalachia Food Summit 2016. Of course, I stayed for the song...directly following the Hops/Brewing talk...I believe community, food, and music are undeniably and powerfully connected."

In an editorial posted a few days after the event, the writer remarked, "Many of the organizers and participants are also deeply involved in economic transition work, searching for ways the region can rebuild...It's great to also consider and celebrate Appalachia's long, lasting and, at the same time, ever-changing cultural riches. Nothing brings people together like food."

As a community garden based food security program, Grow Appalachia could not agree more.

## THE 2016







## GARDENING FOR ALL AGES

### LINDA LEFORCE GRANDPARENT AS PARENT GARDENER

As a grandparent raising her grandchildren, I have roughly \$16.36 a day to feed a family of 4. During the school year, we get by because my kids eat breakfast and lunch at school. But during the summer I have to make more meals, on the same budget. This summer, we ate with your program for breakfast at the park, lunch next door to my neighborhood at Glades Christian Church, and at the Berea Farmers Market on Saturday. This saved my family over \$1,264 in food, and made it possible to use our money to buy better lean meats, fresh fruit, and locally grown produce, as well as more whole grain food for home.

Lastly a big benefit was making new friendships, and my kids formed bonds this summer with your staff, volunteers who gave their time and talents to not only feed them, but also make us feel welcome, and cared for by our community. We have pictures of a fun filled summer that we could not have had without you. Thank you for everything, and we hope to see you again next year!

Sincerely,  
Linda Leforce  
Berea Neighborhood Food Project  
Berea, KY



## # OF 2016 GARDENERS AGES 60 AND OVER: 491



Grow Appalachia participants come from many walks of life: children, single parents, displaced coal miners, retired adults, grandparents raising grandchildren. Adults in the Central Appalachian region are famously hard-working and strong-spirited in their efforts to provide for themselves and their families. For Grow Appalachia adult gardeners that are of retirement age, their interest in the program stems from a desire to not only have access to better food options, but to fill their time with activity that is stimulating, productive, and fulfilling. Grow Appalachia seeks to improve food security in the region, but what's giving rise out of this mission is almost an unintentional promotion of overall wellbeing among gardeners. Going on this, a few of Grow Appalachia's partner sites are targeting their outreach efforts to include more older adult gardeners, including grandparents as parents. Many GA partner sites also work with senior citizens centers, health departments, and their county's extension offices, to both ensure that adult gardeners of all ages and backgrounds feel welcomed and included in their GA community, and have access to gardening space so they are able to consume fresh fruits and vegetables at any time. Grandparents as parent gardeners often tend their gardens with their grandchildren, which results in familial closeness and children obtaining comprehensive knowledge in where food comes from. Retired gardeners are often able to devote significant time to their gardens, which can lead to more productive yields compared to their working adult counterparts. Many of Grow Appalachia's adult gardeners are appreciative of the opportunity to learn how to grow their own food, organically, so that they are able to play their own role in providing fresher options for themselves. Grow Appalachia prides itself on meeting growers where they are, hoping to further ignite that passion for growth among gardeners of all ages.



## MAKING CONNECTIONS: A GROW APPALACHIA LOVE STORY

Love for good food, love for the Earth we grow it in, and love for the communities we share it with, can only lead to one thing—more love. At Grow Appalachia, that love is initiated in the grants we give out to partner sites, is passed on in the workshops and resources the partner sites share in their communities, and is returned in the blogs, stories, and statistics we receive about our 3,767 participant gardeners across Central Appalachia.

Sometimes, that love shows up in especially sweet ways, and we'd like to share one of those Grow Appalachia love stories with you! Below is just one of the love stories we've come across recently, but we'd love to hear more! If you are part of your own Grow Appalachia love story (among friends, family members, neighbors, or partners)—we want to showcase it! Contact Alix Burke at [Alix\\_Burke@berea.edu](mailto:Alix_Burke@berea.edu) for more details!

### DELLA & CHARLES



When we interviewed this couple at Pine Mountain Settlement School the day before Thanksgiving they introduced themselves as "I'm Della, Charles' wife" and "I'm Charles, Della's husband". We could tell right from the start that we were going to witness something truly beautiful. Throughout the interview, Charles often praised Della for her experience raising a family and supporting herself by gardening her whole life. Della and Charles have only been married 3, going on 4, years, so to hear him acknowledge and respect her life before he was really in it was something special. Both Della and Charles gardened before joining Grow Appalachia, but mentioned how the knowledge they gained from the Grow Appalachia workshops has made their new, post-retirement shared garden thrive. Talking about their garden, Della said, "we're really at the stage of our life where we can play at what we like to do—what we used to have to work at—now we just enjoy playing at it." They talked about wanting to get chickens next year. According to Charles, "We've got the jar picked out, and a place on the shelf picked out. When we get our first egg, we're going to pickle it, we're going to keep it, and put it up there as 'our first egg'." As the interview progressed, they finished each other's sentences, they picked on each other playfully, told stories, and laughed, a lot, together. The love and respect they share for each other was made obvious in their words and interactions. "We get along great," Charles said. "We intend to advocate to her grandkids and other people that we know to participate in this Grow Appalachia program. They can really supplement their income with this. I think that's kind of what Grow Appalachia is for, helping this area by doing stuff like that, and we intend to advocate it. But for us, it's just a lot of fun." To Della, "it's just absolute fun."



# THOUGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

*“Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.”*  
Martin Luther King, Jr.

When I think about the fact that Grow Appalachia is in its eighth year of service to the families of central Appalachia I generally have one of two responses: Well, of course. We do solid work impacting the food security of the families we serve and we are having substantial impact on the local economies of six states. People are better fed, more resilient and have a stronger sense of self confidence. We spend our money frugally and strategically. We aren't the only players in the region but we are a big piece of the puzzle and we are doing things nobody else does. Part of that is the flexibility we have always had from John Paul DeJoria, our primary funder over the years. A big part of that comes from just spending time and talking with the nonprofit partners and families in the program and letting them tell us what they need from us, how we can use our resources most effectively.

And the other response is: Holy moly, did not see that coming. Because as the communities of central Appalachia have changed over that time, so have we. Much of our work is essentially the same as it has been since the beginning – but much has changed.

Our primary mission remains the same: To help as many families in central Appalachia grow as much of their own food as possible, to work with them so they know how to cook the fruits and vegetables in heart-healthy ways, preserve the excess in safe, research based techniques and sell what they can in the varied marketplaces of their communities. Increasingly we have gotten involved in expanding the food infrastructure of the counties we work in, the farmers' markets and roadside stands and the community kitchens. We offered over 500 classes across the region this year because there is real power in knowledge. And we have helped build community wherever we have gone, working with local organizations and families as genuine partners in this very important work.

These are difficult and troubling times in America, especially in rural areas which have seen a steady decline in the numbers of jobs, young people, and philanthropic investments. No place is this more true than the coalfield counties of Appalachia. The sense of unease that was inescapable in years past has become even palpable.

But if we have learned anything in the past seven years it is that nothing brings people together more than growing food, cooking together and sharing that homegrown goodness with others. Some people build walls. We build bridges. And we are just getting started. As Naomi Nagata says in *The Expanse*, “Next is enough. As long as you always see the next step, you can walk the whole way.”

## OUR DIRECTOR THROUGH THE YEARS



**THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR PARTNERS, GARDENERS,  
SITE COORDINATORS AND DONORS. WITHOUT YOUR WORK  
AND CONTRIBUTIONS, WE WOULD NOT BE HERE.**



**PLEASE CONSIDER A GIFT TO CONTINUE  
OUR WORK OF ADDRESSING FOOD  
INSECURITY IN CENTRAL APPALACHIA.**

## WHAT YOUR CONTRIBUTION COULD DO:

**\$30** PURCHASE A QUALITY HAND TOOL FOR A GARDENER

**\$60** PURCHASE CANNING AND PRESERVATION SUPPLIES FOR A FAMILY

**\$100** PURCHASE ONE YEAR'S SUPPLY OF ORGANIC SEEDS FOR A FAMILY

**\$200** PURCHASE DURABLE SEASON EXTENSION SUPPLIES FOR A GARDEN

**\$500** PURCHASE WORKSHOP MATERIALS + COORDINATION LABOR FOR INSTRUCTION

**\$1000** TOTAL GARDEN PACKAGE FOR A FAMILY TO PRODUCE FOOD FOR ONE YEAR





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