2019 ANNUAL REPORT
The director

From 2009 to 2019, 10 years in review...

As a cooperative extension service agent in southern West Virginia for 13 years, my recognition of the prevalence of nutrition-related health disorders, paired with the presence of thousands of small garden plots gone fallow, always represented both a terrible frustration and a great opportunity. That initial phone call from John Paul in 2009 highlighted the opportunity and Grow Appalachia is the result. Ten years on, we have worked with over 6,000 families who have grown more than four million pounds of nutritious, chemical free fruits and vegetables. Our partnerships in the Appalachian counties of six states in the region (KY, TN, WV, OH, and NC) have resulted in the development of a dozen farmers’ markets, we have built eight shared-use commercial kitchens in three states, and our participating families have sold hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of excess produce with our encouragement and support. The Grow Appalachia social enterprise team has built and installed over 130 high tunnels and distributed hundreds of thousands of pounds of organic fertilizer in communities where these soil amendments, and other sustainable farming tools and supplies, were otherwise unavailable. The technical assistance crew has developed over 100 conservation action plans and small-farm production plans for new and beginning farmers across central and eastern Kentucky. And Berea Kids Eat, our summer and after-school feeding program, has served over 92,000 meals and 200 days of nutrition education to over 4,144,000 families in Central Appalachia to create healthy, resilient, and economically viable food systems where healthy food is accessible to all.

Yes, the numbers are important and we share our impact-fueled statistics with everyone. We are proud of this work, our partners are all in and of the region, most having decades of service in their home communities.

The food history of the region tells a tale that shifts from one of great independence and interdependence of communities, small farms and families to a present day in which 90% of the average diet is shipped from 100 miles away or more. No greater vehicle for equitable community development, diversification of local economies and the creation of widespread personal agency exists that has the potential of Appalachian families growing much more of their own food. Folks who grow their own food develop an appreciation for the efforts of producers (small and large) who can grow food that home gardens cannot produce. Gardeners become market growers and truck farmers. Young people start to see that growing food can be part of the way to be able to stay in their home communities. People become healthier, intergenerational cooperation and mentoring increases. Folks from different parts of the political and social spectrum share tools and exchange growing tips and recipes. Children get fed.

A substantial expansion in the production, consumption and marketing of local foods in central Appalachia will not solve all the problems or cure all the ills. No single answer can address the enormous challenges facing Appalachia today, but this work can be a keystone in the evolution of a safer, kinder and healthier region. And we intend to be a part of it, just as we have from our beginning over a decade ago.

We invite you to work with us and join us in this noble experiment. It’s a big tent.

SINCE 2009...

Grow Appalachia, a Strategic Initiative of Berea College, began as a partnership in 2009 between Berea College and JP’s Peace, Love & Happiness Foundation to address food insecurity in Appalachia.

For more than 10 years, Grow Appalachia has been partnering with organizations, communities, and families in Central Appalachia to create healthy, resilient, and economically viable food systems where healthy food is accessible to all.

With your help, we can continue addressing food insecurity (at the family level) through these initiatives:

- Gardening to Increase Regional Food Security
- Technical Assistance for Farmers
- Social Enterprise through High Tunnel Infrastructure and Education
- Berea Kids Eat: Feeding and Providing Nutrition Education to Berea Youth
- Commercial Kitchen Infrastructure & Development
- Urban Food Production & Agricultural Skill Building in Louisville
For the past six months we have been in the thick of strategic planning at the Grow Appalachia headquarters. While still very much in the beginning phases, we have made some exciting progress to date, including updating our mission and vision statements (see right).

We’ve been gathering data about food insecurity, population projections, and demographic information that will help inform our plan. We are currently working on our value statements and are setting goals for the full strategic plan that will help guide us over the next three years as an organization.

From these goals, we will be looking at gathering input from participants and partners to help us consider the ways we partner and work with community organizations, how we continue growing as an organization, and how we seek to impact food insecurity throughout central Appalachia.

Without our partners and Grow Appalachia families, the work wouldn’t be possible, so gathering feedback will be critical to our three-year strategy and plan.

We’ve been incredibly fortunate to partner with Nina Gregg of Communication Resources out of Maryville, TN, who has helped guide our work throughout this process. Her thoughtfulness and approach to planning has been an incredible asset in keeping staff grounded and helping us intentions for the process. Stay tuned to our e-newsletter to keep up with how our plan continues to unfold!

Our vision is a vibrant regional food system where healthy food is accessible to all.

The Strategic Initiatives division is responsible for overseeing and stewarding relationships with external funding partners that support on-campus programming as well as educational, food insecurity, and leadership development programming in the Appalachian region. Grow Appalachia, the Brushy Fork Leadership Institute, and Partners for Education comprise the externally-facing programs of the division that provide meaningful and effective outreach in collaboration with partners in the Appalachian region.

NEW GROW APPALACHIA PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

Elora Overbey will be providing administrative support to all Grow Appalachia initiatives and assisting with communications and development.

Elora grew up in New Mexico and studied photojournalism and advertising at University of Oregon before becoming a Fellow in the Farm & Food Fellowship Program at Allegheny Mountain Institute in Highland County, VA.

She is passionate about visual storytelling, increasing access to fresh and nutritious food in her community, exploring new cooking techniques, growing her own food, and is excited to join the Grow Appalachia team!
2019 New Projects

National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA)

Beginning Farmer Series

USDA Beginning Farmer & Rancher

Beginning Farmer Series

Over the next 8 months, our 120 enrolled farmers will attend monthly sessions on production and business planning, crop management, protected agriculture, harvesting, marketing, and resource development, ending with an awards ceremony in August.

For our 2020 Beginning Farmer Series, we will be working with four cohorts of farmers grouped by the following regions: Berea, Clay County, Hindman, and Wolfe County.

Our Beginning Farmer Series is made possible by a three year Beginning Farmer & Rancher Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We are excited to be working in partnership with Kentucky Center for Ag & Rural Development, the Organic Association of Kentucky, Community Farm Alliance, Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation, and the Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council to collaborate on offering classroom sessions, paid internship opportunities with experienced farmers for eight weeks during the growing season, field days, and farmer-to-farmer gatherings in eastern KY and production planning support for beginning farmers in east TN over the next three years!

In 2019, Berea Kids Eat and NRPA renovated the playground, hosted cooking classes, a garden literacy camp, and other gardening activities at Glades Community Garden in addition to piloting a free produce store during summer months where BKE was serving summer meals.

We partnered with 22 Garden Grant Partners in 2019 in five states. Through our partnerships we helped producers grow and harvest over 395,603 pounds of produce. Our partners hosted 217 workshops with over 2,800 attendees gaining hands-on knowledge in organic gardening methods, nutritious cooking, and food preservation methods. We were also able to finish construction on eight certified commercial kitchens, in three different states, for local producers to use for community gathering events, creating value added products, establishing catering businesses, and hosting workshops.

Our Technical Assistance team has been hard at work in 2019 visiting farmers, creating conservation plans to support producers transitioning to organic growing methods, planning for our upcoming Beginning Farmer Series, and drafting high tunnel conservation and production plans. In partnership with the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund, our team has created 79 custom growing plans, developed a video series on organic weed control, drafted 228 soil sample recommendations, conducted over 80 farm visits, and worked with farmers in over 27 Eastern Kentucky counties since the EKY-DIGS program began in 2018.

Social Enterprise

In 2019, our Social Enterprise team worked with local farmers to install 9 high tunnels and sell 44,000 pounds of Mountain Pride organic fertilizer and 4,000 pounds of feather meal fertilizer. New offerings also include: three different high tunnel designs, including the new modular, movable high tunnel, drip irrigation and water catchment supplies with installation services; our organic Mountain Pride chicken litter fertilizer and feather meal fertilizer; woven ground cover; insect netting; shade cloth; and low tunnel kits for regional farmers. In 2020, the Social Enterprise team will continue to share resources, expand their operation, and prototype a mobile “chicken tractor” for farmers to purchase.

Berea Kids Eat

Berea Kids Eat successfully piloted a Youth Farmers Market with the partnership of NRPA, installed a mural with the Center for Ecological Diversity, distributed over 3,200 pounds of produce and recipe cards with a Friday backpack program, and distributed over 16,000 summer meals and over 9,000 after school meals for youth in Berea. In 2020, BKE will be planning a mobile meals bus that can bring meals to neighborhoods without access to parks. BKE will also be constructing an outdoor education center at Glades Community Garden, a community gathering site for summer meals and educational programming. If you would like to get involved, volunteers for youth garden workdays and cooking education classes are welcomed during the summer months.
10 YEARS IN REVIEW

2009
1ST YEAR PROGRAM LAUNCH
WORK WITH 4 GARDEN GRANT PARTNERS & 96 FAMILIES WHO GREW 100,000 LBS OF PRODUCE IN THEIR GARDENS

2010
15 GARDEN GRANT PARTNERS & 1,142 FAMILIES
JOHN PAUL VISITS OUR GARDEN PARTNERS AT THE LAUREL COUNTY AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CENTER (LCAAHC)
GROW BEGINS INVESTING IN FARMERS MARKETS ACROSS THE REGION

2011
25 GARDEN GRANT PARTNERS & 2,400 FAMILIES
BEGIN HIGH TUNNEL CONSTRUCTION

2012
GARDEN GRANT PARTNERS OFFER 500 GARDENING, COOKING, & PRESERVATION CLASSES
JOHN PAUL VISITS US AT GREENHOUSE17

2013
10 YEARS IN REVIEW

2014
15 GARDEN GRANT PARTNERS & 1,142 FAMILIES
JOHN PAUL RETURNS TO VISIT OUR PARTNERS AT THE LCAAHC
GROW BEGINS INVESTING IN FARMERS MARKETS ACROSS THE REGION

2015
44 GARDEN GRANT PARTNERS & 2,812 FAMILIES
BEGIN HIGH TUNNEL SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
OVER 100 FULL+ PART TIME JOBS CREATED ACROSS THE REGIOIN

2016
LAUNCH BEREAL HIGH TUNNEL FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM: YEAR 1
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE BEGINS SELLING WATER CATCHMENT SYSTEMS
START ORGANIC TRANSITION TRAINING FOR PRODUCERS

2017
Berea Kids Eat (formerly SFSP) ADDS AFTER SCHOOL FEEDING COMPONENT, BECOMING 1ST COLLEGE INSTITUTION TO OFFER YEAR-ROUND MEALS & PROGRAMMING IN THE NATION

2018
LAUNCH BEGINNING FARMER SERIES
MORE THAN 6,000 GARDEN FAMILIES TO DATE AND 4 MILLION LBS OF PRODUCE GROWN

2019
BEGIN INTENSIVE PRODUCTION PLANNING SUPPORT FOR EASTERN KY FARMERS
79 CUSTOM FARM PLANS FOR FARMERS
92 FARM VISITS IN 29 EASTERN KY COUNTIES

GA MARKET GARDENERS SELL $80,146 AT LOCAL MARKETS
NRCS RECEIVE USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE GRANT TO IMPLEMENT SOIL HEALTH PRACTICES
Berea Kids Eat (formerly SFSP) ADDS AFTER SCHOOL FEEDING COMPONENT, BECOMING 1ST COLLEGE INSTITUTION TO OFFER YEAR-ROUND MEALS & PROGRAMMING IN THE NATION

92,000 MEALS SERVED TO KIDS TO DATE
PILOT YEAR FOR BEREAL JR. FARMERS MARKET
JOHN PAUL HELPS US CELEBRATE 10 YEARS OF PROGRAMMING BY VISITING BEREAL
LAUNCH BEGINNING FARMER SERIES
MORE THAN 6,000 GARDEN FAMILIES TO DATE AND 4 MILLION LBS OF PRODUCE GROWN

2015
8 COMMERCIALY CERTIFIED SHARED-USE KITCHENS BUILT IN THREE STATES

OVER 130 HIGH TUNNELS INSTALLED FOR REGIONAL PRODUCERS

8 commercially certified shared-use kitchens built in three states

Berea Kids Eat (formerly SFSP) adds after school feeding component, becoming 1st college institution to offer year-round meals & programming in the nation

92,000 meals served to kids to date

John Paul helps us celebrate 10 years of programming by visiting Berea

Launch beginning farmer series

More than 6,000 garden families to date and 4 million lbs of produce grown

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In September, we were honored to host John Paul and Eloise DeJoria, along with JP’s Peace, Love & Happiness Foundation Director, Constance Dykhuizen. This was John Paul and Eloise’s first visit to Berea and to Berea College, so we were excited to share more about the great initiatives across campus and the city.

Our first visit was to the Berea Urban Farm to learn more about their Harvesting Hope Program and share the collaborations with Grow Appalachia. Earlier this season, our Social Enterprise team, Kayla Preston and Terra Cash, led a workshop on building a high tunnel and high tunnel construction basics with women from the Harvesting Hope Program. The Harvesting Hope Program has worked with more than 26 women through job-related skills training and we are honored to support their work through high tunnel and water catchment system installations, workshops and hands-on training.

The next day, we all met at the Glades Community Garden, as the sun was coming up over the high tunnel where we met to learn more about the role of community gardens and how they have contributed to increasing food security and youth entrepreneurship in Berea. Eloise and John Paul helped release a few monarch butterflies with some of the youth who have been raising pollinators at the garden. At the end of our visit, they made a generous donation to the community garden to build the Peace, Love & Butterflies Outdoor Education Center! The Center will provide space for raising monarchs and teaching pollinator programming as well as a greenhouse to grow plants for the community garden. We are so excited to collaborate with community partners on pollinator programming and habitats and can’t wait to see this space up and running in Summer 2020.

We gathered on campus with our Grow Appalachia partner site coordinators and families to share a meal together and celebrate the work of Grow Appalachia from the past 10 years. We were thrilled for each of us to have a moment to thank John Paul, Eloise and JP’s Peace, Love & Happiness Foundation for their continued support of our program. Over the past 10 years they have contributed more than $6.5 million to support family and community gardening, farmer development, and hunger relief throughout six states of central Appalachia.

By the end of their visit to Berea, John Paul and Eloise had committed grant funds for continued support of Grow Appalachia, an Outdoor Education Center at the Glades Community Garden, as well as pollinator programming for Berea College and Grow Appalachia. We are so grateful for their generosity and support these past 10 years and cannot wait for what the future holds for Grow Appalachia in the next 10!

“The most fulfilling aspect I have found of this partnership is the fact it is expanding more rapidly than you or I would have ever thought, and it’s influencing more people while physically and mentally changing people’s lives” - John Paul DeJoria
MARTINA LEFORCE RECEIVES SECOND ANNUAL RURAL SPIRIT AWARD

We are overjoyed to share that Martina Leforce, Grow Appalachia’s Berea Kids Eat Coordinator, was selected to receive the 2019 Rural Spirit Community Service Award! She was one of three individuals nationally recognized by Osborn Barr Paramore across Rural America for making a difference in their communities. This award seeks to recognize an individual who goes above and beyond to donate time and support to selflessly grow their community through exceptional service.

Five years ago, Leforce established the summer feeding program Berea Kids Eat located in Berea, Kentucky. It has since been her mission to grow the program so that food is made available to children throughout the Appalachian region. Through established partnerships, Berea Kids Eat now feeds 22 local sites. Leforce also helped organize community gardens and a junior farmers market program, growing the intergenerational bonds between volunteers, farmers and Berea’s youth.

“Martina represents everything the Community Service Rural Spirit Award stands for, and I’m delighted to honor her dedication to her local community,”

OBP President Rhonda Ries

“It has been an immense joy working with various vendors... and artisans during the course of this project. I have had the opportunity to listen to many people tell stories from their childhood. Of eating fried apple pies, or handmade quilts they received as wedding gifts from grandmothers and aunts...One of the most delightful parts was watching a little girl working on a hand embroidery piece and saying she couldn’t wait to show her Grandma what she had done because her Grandma also embroiders...”

- University of Tennessee Extension Agent

INTERGENERATIONAL, PLACE-BASED PROGRAMMING AT FARMERS MARKETS

Grow Appalachia had the opportunity to collaborate with a private funder in 2019 to pilot an arts-based farmers market project that supported intergenerational foodways and traditional arts programming at four farmers markets across central Appalachia: the Letcher County Farmers Market in Whitesburg, KY; the Williamson Farmers Market in Williamson, WV; the Scott County Farmers Market in Oneida, TN; and the Berea Farmers Market in Berea, KY.

These markets hosted activities, workshops, and programs around traditional music, crafts, foodways, folklore, and storytelling. A particular focus was geared toward increasing participation from young children and their families to build a strong, intergenerational community spirit.

All of the farmers market managers reported increased attendance and community participation as a result of these arts-based opportunities.
2019 GARDEN GRANT PARTNERS & IMPACT

KY

Cowan Community Center
Henderson Settlement
Laurel County African American Heritage Center
Hindman Settlement School
Martin County Extension
Magoffin County Extension
Pine Mountain Settlement School
Owsley County Farm-to-School
Red Bird Mission
St. Vincent Mission

$161,564

217 Community workshops

$40,482 Site generated revenue

395,603 Pounds of harvest

$228,560 Leveraged resources

2,803 Workshop attendees

VA

Appalachian Sustainable Development
Boys Home of Virginia
Wise County Extension

$43,000

WV

High Rocks
Linwood Community Daycare
Step-by-Step Big Ugly
Step-by-Step Logan
Williamson Health and Wellness Center

$67,269

TN

Scott Christian Care Center
Build it Up East Tennessee
Rural Resources

$46,800

OH

Over-the-Rhine People’s Garden

$3,000

City of Berea
Dinner Bell Restaurant
Dr. Sarah E. DeRossett
Elaine Musselman
Fairy Powers Sells
First Christian Church of Berea
Frank Dickerson
Jason Christopher Fults
J.D. Heffernan
Jessica Wells
John Paul Mitchell Systems
JP’s Peace Love and Happiness Foundation
Kentucky Agriculture Development Fund
Madison County Conservation District
The Matt Ross Fund
Ms. Dorothy Leifheit
Mr. John Weaver
PeaceCraft Berea
Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation Inc
Subway of Berea
The Educational Foundation of America
United States Department of Agriculture - NIFA
United States Department of Agriculture - NRCS
OUR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE HAS ADDED SOME NEW PRODUCTS TO OUR INVENTORY TO CONTINUE PROVIDING RESOURCES FOR GARDENERS AND FARMERS. CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE!  Contact Kayla Preston 859-302-1174 or prestonk@berea.edu