ABOUT RURAL ACTION

Nestled in the foothills of Appalachian Ohio, Rural Action was founded in 1991 on the principle that locally-based, sustainable, and inclusive development is the main strategy for building resilient rural Appalachian communities.

Rural Action’s mission is to build a more just economy by developing the region’s assets in environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable ways. Together, we envision a region with clean streams and healthy forests; a place where thriving family farms, meaningful livelihoods and vibrant communities exist for everyone; with people engaged as good stewards of the world they live in and working together to make this vision a reality.

As a membership-based organization, we believe the best development is done with participation from diverse groups who have a stake in the outcome. Our role is to empower communities to value and take ownership of our environment, economy, and community, so we can meet the needs of the current generation while also building a just and sustainable future.

Rural Action continues to expand because there is great demand for smart local solutions to global and regional problems. Our reach is made possible through a robust 31-member AmeriCorps program, Ohio Stream Restore Corps, administered by Rural Action in partnership with more than a dozen organizations in Ohio.

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Dear friends,

We hope you enjoy this report on Rural Action’s work in 2019. It was a year of growth and new possibilities, and we are excited to share some of our accomplishments with you. This work is only possible due to the passion and hard work of lots of people—our members, our partners, and the communities we work with. That’s not just a polite nod to the concept of partnership—we mean it with all our hearts.

The projects you’ll read about in this annual report absolutely rely on real collaboration. We are so grateful to be able to work in a region that gets that—a region where people care more about solving problems than about who gets credit for it. Thank you for making all of this possible.

If you want a quick glance at some statistics, you will find that. And if you want to read real stories about people making a difference, grab a cup of tea and settle in for some inspiration.

Our True Pigments team, building on a partnership with Ohio University and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources that spans more than a decade, was awarded the JM Kaplan Innovation Prize and made great strides toward fixing the worst acid mine drainage seep in the State of Ohio.

The huge community effort to develop the Bailey’s Mountain Bike Trail system got a big boost by receiving support from the Appalachian Regional Commission to promote entrepreneurship and economic development in the trail towns surrounding the project.

We also experienced some losses this year. In particular, we want to honor the memory of one of our founders, Mary Anne Flournoy. Mary Anne was a friend and mentor to many of us, and she is dearly missed.

In a time of great uncertainty, and in the face of complex challenges on a global scale, we continue to find hope and inspiration in the people of the region. We’re grateful for a strong team of capable leaders, a board with vision, and members who believe in the possibility of a vibrant, resilient community rooted in the place we call home.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about what we’ve accomplished together as Rural Action. Thank you for caring enough to be involved in creating solutions. We’re grateful.

Debbie Phillips
Chief Executive Officer

Rick Hindman
Chair of the Board

Debbie Phillips
Chief Executive Officer
HOW WE WORK

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to build a more just economy by developing the region’s assets in environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable ways.

OUR CORE WORK CENTER ON:

• Helping small communities do big things
• Growing local businesses and jobs
• Restoring our environment
• Cultivating the next generation of leaders

Our decades of experience working in Appalachian Ohio have taught us some critical lessons which have shaped our approach to participatory development. Our approach is rooted in the work of many partners across Central Appalachia and rural America who believe we have the power to write our preferred future.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

If you look at the evolution of Rural Action’s work, you can see how this theory applies in the real world. Let’s use our watershed work as an example. Rural Action has worked with local citizens in several watersheds to engage around the problems left behind by the pre-regulatory mining practices of the past—acid mine drainage and impaired streams. This is interesting because, if you’re not careful at the beginning of a conversation with people, they might see a conflict, in the classic jobs vs. the environment mentality. But if you spend some time, listen and show respect, people will start to open up, and share that they are really sad that they can’t fish in the streams anymore. It’s heartbreaking, because the quality of life and the beauty here in rural Appalachian Ohio is something people love deeply.

Rural Action staff and VISTAs spent time working in local communities studying the problems and figuring out what needed to change—learning together. Over the years, we have helped to articulate the value of clean water as a natural asset. We have worked with partners to build infrastructure such as dosers and new stream channels in some places to remediate the impacted waterways. By learning together, caring about our environment, and using the lens of creating long-term solutions, several years ago we began working with Dr. Guy Riefler, an engineer and professor, at Ohio University on a permanent way to remove iron oxide from the stream, creating a valuable product (iron oxide pigment) that could be sold while paying for the restoration of the impacted stream (see page 20-21 to read more). John Sabraw, an artist at Ohio University, helped us refine the product and connect to markets. This partnership has led to the creation of a business called True Pigments, LLC., bringing the vision of many to reality.

It would be possible to clean up those streams by another approach. Some big outside group could come in and spend money to install limestone dosers. But the legacy would be another act of disempowerment. People in the community would have no ownership, and might in fact resent the work. The WAY Rural Action works is as important as the programmatic goal. The programmatic goal and the measurable results are important, but the lasting change will come when people feel empowered and connected and when they feel ownership of the results.

WHERE WE WORK

Rural Action has 5 offices located on the ground in communities where we work. In 2019, Rural Action reached 34 Ohio counties, 27 directly through Rural Action programs. Additionally, 7 counties were served through our Appalachian Ohio Restore Corps partners and Zero Waste Event Productions, LLC. In 2019, Rural Action also worked and collaborated in 10 states beyond Ohio including West Virginia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, Minnesota, and Illinois through Zero Waste Event Productions, LLC, and regional partnerships.

Appalachian counties served directly through Rural Action
Additional counties reached through Ohio Stream Restore Corps partners
Additional Ohio counties served through Rural Action social enterprises
WHAT WE’VE GOTTEN DONE TOGETHER
OVER A DECADE WITH OUR MEMBERS + PARTNERS...

6 7
with the help of partners and engaged citizens, the recycling rate has more than tripled in Athens and Hocking Counties, the primary focus area of Rural Action’s Zero Waste program.

INCREASED RECYCLING TO 36.8%
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2.05 MILLION DOLLARS
have been paid directly to local farmers through the Chesterhill Produce Auction. During this period, over 3 million dollars have been added to the local economy and more fresh local produce has been consumed in rural communities, schools, and food banks across a 20-county area.

107,400 YOUTH & ADULTS
have been engaged in local environmental issues, biodiversity, and environmental stewardship opportunities.

101 Festivals
have been serviced across six states, by Zero Waste Event Productions, a Rural Action social enterprise. Our work has diverted more than 200,000 lbs from the landfill and brought awareness on the impact of waste to 475,000 event attendees.

12,100 VOLUNTEERS
have been recruited, serving more than 58,100 hours supporting organizations and programs in communities of need.

31 SPECIES
of native fish have returned to streams once considered dead, thanks to restoration efforts across four watersheds seriously affected by acid mine drainage (AMD).

INCREASED RECYCLING TO 36.8%
with the help of partners and engaged citizens, the recycling rate has more than tripled in Athens and Hocking Counties, the primary focus area of Rural Action’s Zero Waste program.

25 JOBS
have been created or retained through our Resilient Communities Program since it began in 2017.

800 LBS
of ginseng seed and ramp bulbs have been distributed, adding nearly $1 million in potential value to woodland growers while helping to save at-risk indigenous plants.

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of native fish have returned to streams once considered dead, thanks to restoration efforts across four watersheds seriously affected by acid mine drainage (AMD).
When a group of producers and food entrepreneurs in Appalachian Ohio saw evidence of an unmet demand for specialty dairy products, they set to work creating resources that give small, local producers the tools they need to build profitable businesses around it.

The team, which included Rural Action staff, Becky Rondy of Green Edge Organic Gardens, Leslie Schaller of the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet), and four area dairy producers, applied for and received a $165,000 grant from North Central Region-Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (NCR-SARE) to research and do outreach around specialty dairy products.

The project created a training program taught by four women dairy producers — Krista Duval of Creekside Farms, Michelle Gorman of Integration Acres, Abbe Turner of Lucky Penny Farms, and Annie Warmke of Blue Rock Station. These women shared their experiences and wisdom with 220 producers, specifically targeting women and producers with limited resources. The peer-to-peer workshops focused on specialty dairy operating models, regulatory compliance, and improving profitability.

Turner, who operates Lucky Penny Creamery in Kent, Ohio, makes artisan cheeses and award-winning candies with goat’s milk. In addition to the nuts and bolts of running a specialty dairy business, Turner says one of the messages she tried to share was how to identify community resources and access them.

“Even after the 14th draft, there was no one who would take my business plan seriously,” said Turner. “ACEnet and Rural Action provided that necessary support. These organizations connect deeply to the local consumer and are critical to building infrastructure in our communities.”

Inspired by a cadre of women-led dairies in Ohio, Turner and her daughter, Madeline, worked together on a book in conjunction with the grant project. “The Land of Milk and Money” shares the stories of 17 successful women dairy producers.

“I wasted way too much time and money when I got started,” said Turner. “Sometimes I feel like being an entrepreneur is a lonely thing; the reality is that most of these struggles are just business. The book is a compilation of stories about learning and earning your stripes, and falling and getting back up.”

Even after the 14th draft, there was no one who would take my business plan seriously. ACEnet and Rural Action provided that necessary support. These organizations connect deeply to the local consumer and are critical to building infrastructure in our communities.”

~ Abbe Turner, Lucky Penny Farm

BY THE NUMBERS

6,100 LBS of locally grown produce was processed and delivered to 7,596 students at 18 schools across six southeast Ohio districts. This was only possible with the help of volunteers who spent 750 hours washing and preparing the produce through our Farm to School project.

705 ACRES were under production to grow the 305,000 lbs of fresh produce sold through the Chesterhill Produce Auction to 120 buyers and 76 businesses and organizations.

200 GROWERS from 15 Ohio and 6 West Virginia counties generated income through the Chesterhill Produce Auction in 2019. Gross sales were $374,006, a 22% increase from 2018.

21,044 LBS of locally grown produce was sold at 10 SITES in food desert communities through Country Fresh Stops, a pop-up retail project of Rural Action.
"I actually applied the things I learned in the classroom," said Karley Carpenter, a participant in Rural Action's first summer internship program, as she presented to a room of adults working to increase economic development in local communities. Karley discussed her internship with Rural Action's watershed restoration program and how she used her classroom chemistry training to monitor stream health and combat acidic outflow from abandoned coal mines.

Karley spent 80 hours with Rural Action's watershed team over the summer, gaining a wealth of hands-on resume-building experience. "I knew the creeks were orange but I didn't know why," said Karley, originally from Crooksville. After a few hours in the field with Rural Action's Nate Schlater and Tim Ferrell, however, she knew exactly why. Karley also helped with Monday Creek's summer day camps for children, which she feels is critical because "currently kids are growing up with their faces in iPads."

Karley is one of 26 high school students who participated in Rural Action's internship program in 2019 (its first year). The program was coordinated by Athens High School teacher Allison Ricket and funded by Martha Holden Jennings Foundation and Rural Action's Resilient Communities Program (via the Appalachian Regional Commission). The internships fill a key void that we hope will keep more students in the region after graduation; students get introduced to businesses and organizations they did not previously know about. Erica Frost, a summer intern with Passionworks, said she "learned you can recycle anything" from supervisor Stephanie Robinson.

In addition to hands-on experience, students get to test the waters of a particular career path. Perhaps most importantly, they find a sense of belonging and purpose. During her internship at Athens Community Center, Abby Webb discovered that working with preschool students "makes me feel needed in the world."

Rural Action is seeking funds to expand this internship program in 2020 and beyond with the leadership of Allison Ricket and partnership from Project RISE at the Athens-Meigs Educational Service Center and Washington County's Building Bridges to Careers. So many organizations care about the future of children in this region and are eager to give them reasons to stick around after graduation, which should give us all hope for the future.

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"I actually applied the things I learned in the classroom." ~ Karley Carpenter, Student
SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Rural Action’s AmeriCorps programming is often described as “how we get the work done” in our communities. Tom Johnson, Rural Action Partner and Mayor of Somerset, Ohio, once described our AmeriCorps members as the “wind in the sails” of the work that we do collectively - a fresh, energetic infusion into each year of Rural Action’s growth.

It’s true, our service members do a lot of heavy lifting and bring incredible energy to projects in the communities they work in. In turn, we help grow our members through professional and personal development. Part of Rural Action’s core work is cultivating the next generation of leaders.

AmeriCorps members who graduate from a term of National Service through one of our programs move on to a diverse array of opportunities, including furthering their education or into employment with organizations like the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Audubon Society, Stuart’s Opera House, Tennessee Dept. of Environment and Conservation, StewMac and FEMA—it’s an impressive list!

We are particularly proud when our alums find local opportunities and can keep contributing to communities they care about while building a life in Appalachia. Recently, Hocking College in Nelsonville, Ohio added 3 Ohio Stream Restore Corps AmeriCorps Alums to their Natural Resources faculty team: Jen Johnson (Capacity Builder, 2014-16), Homer Elliott (OSRC Sunday Creek, 2014-16), and Meghan Ellis (Dairy Barn Ora Anderson Trail, 2017-19; Capacity Builder, 2019-20).

Lynn Holtzman, Hocking College Wildlife Management Program Manager, and Dave Swanson, Wildlife and Resources Management Instructor, selected these OSRC alums for their first staff positions at Hocking. “There are many advantages to hiring someone with AmeriCorps experience,” Lynn said. “One is the maturity. They have worked in an organization or they’re involved in higher education. Those combinations are helpful for the work we do here teaching. And a lot of their experience is public presentations and teaching. It’s much easier to hire somebody that has that kind of background.”

Because of creative faculty like Lynn, Dave, Jen, Homer, and Meghan, Hocking College students in Natural Resources meet Rural Action AmeriCorps members throughout the year. OSRC members visit classes, lead field trips, and coordinate volunteer activities. And, having AmeriCorps Alums running their classrooms means that the ethics of grassroots, sustainable, asset-based community development are being spread further into the professional world with each student cohort.

BY THE NUMBERS

900 VOLUNTEERS were recruited by OSRC members in 2019. These volunteers contributed over 5,400 hours of their time to improving their community.

225 MILES of stream were improved through the efforts of OSRC members and community volunteers in 2019.

7,566 HOURS were spent on professional development by OSRC members, growing their skills and knowledge, readying them for life after their AmeriCorps term.

60,000 SERVICE HOURS were spent on the ground in communities of need by 31 OSRC members during 2019. Members participate in an array of community development and environmental restoration projects led by the communities they serve.

“I am a much more well-rounded person after having served through AmeriCorps. I am able to put myself into tasks that I wouldn’t necessarily have been comfortable with before. I was really ingrained in every program, and now I am much more well-versed and can talk to students about their interests and goals. I wouldn’t be able to do this job now if I hadn’t had that experience.”

~ Jen Johnson, Instructor, Hocking College
The Yew Mountain Center in West Virginia lies outside Rural Action’s normal focus area of Appalachian Ohio, but it’s right inside our sweet spot for Sustainable Forestry.

The Yew is on a 500-acre nature preserve nestled among the forests and farms of Hillsboro, West Virginia. It is a place-based organization run by members of the local community, providing experiential education and research opportunities for students of all ages. The idea for an educational center was born from the community’s desire to attract smart, skilled, and creative people to the area while fostering a sustainable local economy.

In 2016, the land where the Yew now sits was slated to be sold. Local residents rallied to find a partner to purchase the property. Today, the Yew Mountain Center offers family-friendly retreats and workshops that explore the multi-faceted aspects of Appalachian ecology, culture, and the arts.

Rural Action and the Yew were introduced in 2018 at a meeting of regional forest farming stakeholders interested in developing an educational and technical assistance hub in West Virginia that would serve as a primary point of contact for landowners.

Recognizing the potential for the Yew to fill this role, Rural Action offered to conduct a site visit and develop a forest farming management plan for the property in 2019. Our partnership has continued to grow, with Rural Action Sustainable Forestry Program staff members serving as speakers at Yew events as well as becoming founding partners of the West Virginia Forest Farming Initiative. Other founding partners include Appalachian Sustainable Development, the Natural Capital Investment Fund/West Virginia Value Chain Cluster Initiative, Sprouting Farms, and United Plant Savers.

The Yew has come a long way in a short time and is poised to become a leader in the quest to support forest farming opportunities in West Virginia and the broader Appalachian region. Rural Action is excited to have the Yew as a new regional partner and member of the forest farming community, and we look forward to all of the great things we will achieve together in the future.

“Rural Action has been a tremendous asset to our young organization. With their help, we have more than tripled the size of our forest farm and are better able to serve beginning forest farmers in our area.”

~ Erica Marks, Director
The Yew Mountain Center

BY THE NUMBERS

23,000 LBS of black walnuts were aggregated and hulled at the Chesterhill Produce Auction in 2019. In total, more than 52,500 lbs. of locally collected walnuts have been processed at the CPA since 2017, providing more than $7,800 in income for local collectors.

15.5 Miles of the proposed Baileys Trail System on The Wayne National Forest were surveyed for populations of ginseng, goldenseal, black cohosh, ramps, and other sensitive plant communities, helping to mark and protect more than 60 populations ahead of trail development.

343 LANDOWNERS and forest products entrepreneurs were trained through workshops, field-days, and other educational events in 2019.

53,000 RAMP SEEDS were collected and planted on the Wayne National Forest, helping to create new populations and restore species in 4 districts across our region.
RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

In 2019, the Wayne National Forest began construction on the Baileys Trail, a project that aspires to become the longest continuous built mountain biking and hiking trail in the eastern United States. Like other rural places that have invested in trail systems, communities around the Baileys Trail are anticipating economic opportunities from increased tourism and business investment as the popularity of the trail grows.

Nelsonville is the largest community near the trail and already has seen more mountain bike visitors who are riding at Lake Hope and Strouds Run state parks. As one way to help Nelsonville benefit from the influx of visitors seeking outdoor recreation, Rural Action organized a group of Nelsonville’s leaders, artists, and public servants to attend the Appalachian Gateway Community Initiative. This workshop allows communities with access to public land to share tips for fostering economic growth while protecting the land and its ecosystems.

“Nelsonville has been bypassed and the community wants to invite visitors to all that Nelsonville has to offer, such as our artisan shops, local eateries, and the entranceway to the Hockhocking bike path,” says Ann Judy, a founding member of the Gateway Nelsonville team. “In order to enhance our town as a destination, we need to guide visitors from the highway and beyond into our community.”

At the workshop, the Nelsonville team developed a project to create a wayfinding system that will connect the city to existing and forthcoming trails. A wayfinding system will ensure there is clear signage helping visitors find the various amenities in and around Nelsonville. Since the initial workshop, the group dedicated to this project has doubled in membership and secured $5,000 from the Gateway Community Seed grant.

The energy around the Gateway project continues to grow, and as the Baileys Trail system moves closer to Nelsonville, the community will be ready to share their assets and amenities with visitors near and far.

“Nelsonville has been bypassed [with a new highway] and the community wants to invite visitors to all that Nelsonville has to offer, such as our artisan shops, local eateries, and the entranceway to the Hockhocking bike path.”

~ Ann Judy, Gateway Nelsonville

BY THE NUMBERS

11 BUSINESSES were assisted by our Resilient Communities team either in their startup phase or in their transition to new ownership in rural communities.

127 LOCAL LEADERS participated in community meetings led by Rural Action to facilitate co-learning and new ideas to support new or existing businesses in six communities.

50 REFERRALS were made to assist businesses in regards to marketing, business planning, and additional technical support.

15 JOBS CREATED through new business or expansion of business activity as a result of direct business outreach by the Entrepreneurial Community Program.
Appalachian Ohio has some of the most important “hotspots” for biological diversity in our state and our region. In 2019, our Watershed Program grew in exciting ways to help identify, restore, and protect our region’s water.

Some surprising things are hiding in plain sight on the bottom of streams and rivers. During the summer of 2019, Rural Action led a research project to sample and identify mussel populations in the Walhonding River. Freshwater mussels are surprisingly complex animals with a fascinating life cycle and are good indicators of water quality. Working with Environmental Solutions & Innovations (ESI), and with funding from the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District, we sampled throughout the mainstem of the Walhonding River in Coshocton County.

The Walhonding is fed by tributaries including Killbuck Creek, Kokosing River, and Mohican River. All of these streams are noted for housing excellent populations of mussels. One of the rarest animals, the Purple Catspaw Pearlymussel, has a confirmed breeding population identified in Killbuck Creek, but nowhere else in the world. This federally endangered animal is actively being bred in captivity, so that placement of juvenile mussels can occur in the future in more streams.

While we didn’t locate any Purple Catspaw Pearls shell mussels, our work did document 3 species of federally threatened or endangered animals, along with 10 species of state-listed threatened or endangered animals. We found 3,188 individual mussels, representing 24 species. David Foltz, an aquatic scientist with ESI, helped lead the survey. “Rural Action was instrumental in securing the grant funding for the project as well as aiding in the survey efforts, and furthering community outreach. I speak for ESI when I say I could not be happier with the way everything turned out. The data collected during the survey efforts will aid state and federal agencies in their decision making processes for species we encountered.”

The Walhonding River work is moving forward. We are continuing to meet with partners and landowners to identify land-based practices that will help protect and conserve the healthy streambed habitat mussels need to thrive. And, our watershed program is continuing to adapt to the ever-changing direction of watershed management - we are adding projects focused on nutrient management through home sewer treatment systems, agricultural best management practices, and innovative reuses for previously mined lands. Enjoy the cleaner water that is flowing in our region, and flip a few rocks next time you are near a stream - you never know what surprises you’ll find!
About 66 businesses, schools, and organizations have taken the Zero Waste Pledge since 2013, promising to reduce the amount of waste they send to landfills. The Eclipse Company Store in The Plains was among them. But in 2019, they decided they could do even more.

Eclipse doubled down on its original Zero Waste Pledge, citing five goals for the year – two more than the Pledge requires. Customers might have noticed the disappearance of plastic cups that were used for samples. Now samples are served in small glasses, which creates much less waste.

In addition, the staff works behind the scenes to ensure that leftovers, kitchen food scraps, bottles, cans, napkins, deli wrap paper, and certain single-use plastics all get diverted correctly into their compost and recycling collections.

That sounds like a lot. But there's more. Eclipse also makes sure messy plastics are wiped out or rinsed so they remain recyclable rather than becoming contaminants. They also switched to bulk condiments, replacing plastic single-use containers.

Eclipse Company Store realized education is a key component to being Zero Waste, so they created training to help staff learn proper techniques for recycling and composting. They also added signage near waste bins to give guidance on what should go where.

Rural Action works in partnership with organizations like the Eclipse that take the Zero Waste Pledge, helping them identify waste that is being produced and strategies to reduce it. The Zero Waste Pledge shows the business is committed to using natural resources wisely, increasing its environmental consciousness, and supporting the local economy through waste reduction, recycling, composting, and reuse.

“Rural Action has been instrumental in helping the Eclipse take the Zero Waste Pledge. It’s very important for me and our owner, Jon Sowash, to take the correct steps to make sure we’re doing our part as business owners and managers to be responsible with our waste.”

~ Tristen Phipps, General Manager, Eclipse Company Store

BY THE NUMBERS

160 HOUSEHOLDS

were served by a curbside compost program in the City of Athens after a successful pilot in 2018. In 2020, the City will consider an expansion of the program and Rural Action will continue helping the City learn about other progressive waste management strategies.

36.8% RECYCLING RATE

has been achieved for the Athens-Hocking solid waste district over a 10-year period. This work has been the result of a committed group of partners in Athens and Hocking Counties. In comparison, the rate was only 11.8% a decade ago.

14 ZERO WASTE PLEDGES

were made this year. Since 2013, 86 businesses, nonprofits, schools, and government offices have participated. We applaud the commitment that these entities have made, taking a long-term approach to waste reduction as part of their business model.

26% REDUCTION IN WATER USAGE

by OhioHealth O’Bleness Hospital in 2019 after working with Rural Action to implement a Sustainability Plan and purchasing more efficient equipment. The hospital also reduced waste in landfill by 96%.
SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Clean Energy is not only good for the planet, it’s good for business. That’s why Rural Action launched its Clean Energy Pledge Program in 2019, with Snowville Creamery being the first local business to take the pledge.

The program’s goal is to support nonprofits and small businesses with the technical and financial resources for energy conservation, renewable energy, and clean transportation. Rural Action works with businesses that take the pledge to help set goals, track energy usage, and find effective ways to save energy and incorporate renewable energy technologies such as solar and EV charging stations. Pledge participants also receive access to webinars by Energility, an energy management firm.

During initial assessments, it was clear Snowville already was attuned to energy conservation, using LED lighting and EnergyStar appliances. New goals include using smart thermostats and upgraded windows. There also will be an industrial energy audit to determine the effectiveness of a more efficient HVAC system, cooling tower and additional insulation. Furthermore, Energy Stewards dashboard tracking is creating graphs of utility bills, making it easy to see how efficiency improvements affect costs and consumption over time.

Businesses that take the pledge receive multiple benefits, including media promotion, support from Rural Action staff, potential energy cost savings, and a one-year Rural Action business membership. After Snowville Creamery took the pledge, Rural Action also worked with them to help set up a KIVA loan that was successfully funded and is helping with the purchase of a key piece of equipment.

“Snowville Creamery decided to take the Clean Energy Pledge with Rural Action because it is important for us to be good stewards of the land and members of the community. Snowville strives to do every aspect of business as sustainably and with as little negative environmental impact as possible.”

~ Victoria Taylor
Owner, Snowville Creamery

BY THE NUMBERS

$60,699

was received by two agricultural businesses through the USDA Rural Energy for America (REAP) grant to install solar panels at their facilities. Rural Action provided grantwriting and technical assistance to both of these businesses.

75

PEOPLE

EDUCATED

about clean energy products and technologies at three clean energy expos in Southeast Ohio.

225

HOMES

received items to help families weatherize their homes. Products given out included LED bulbs, power strips, rubberized foam, and solar lanterns.

6 EV STATIONS

were installed in rural communities with support from Rural Action’s Sustainable Energy Program. Increasing access to fast Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations will encourage more residents to buy clean energy vehicles as well as increase tourism from current EV owners.
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Rural Action focuses on asset-based solutions to local problems. Sometimes, you have to get creative to identify assets—in this case, pollution.

“None of us started out trying to make paint,” says Michelle Shively, Director of Project Development for True Pigments, LLC, a social enterprise of Rural Action. “That just emerged as a means to accomplishing our goal of bringing streams back to life. However, we’ve managed to change the problem of AMD (acid mine drainage) into a solution that moves us towards a cleaner, more sustainable environment.”

Approximately 6,650 stream miles in the Central Appalachian states of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia are tainted by AMD. The Truetown Discharge, located in the Sunday Creek Watershed in Athens County, is the single largest AMD discharge in Ohio with a flow rate of 988 gallons per minute, dumping more than 2 million pounds of iron oxide into Sunday Creek each year.

Thanks to a collaboration with two Ohio University professors — Dr. Guy Riefler with the Russ College of Engineering and Technology and John Sabraw with the College of Fine Arts — True Pigments is licensing a process that will extract iron oxide from AMD for use as pigment in paint and other products. In 2019, Rural Action purchased 33 acres of land adjacent to the Truetown Discharge, where it will build its first large-scale AMD water treatment facility of its kind.

When operational, the amount of iron oxide collected at the Truetown facility will equal 2% of the current U.S. rate of domestic production annually. In 2019, over 2,000 lbs of iron oxide was collected from AMD discharges in Sunday Creek, some of which is being used by Gamblin Artists Paints for a limited-edition run of paints called “Reclaimed Colors.” This box set features three colors: Brown Ochre, Rust Red, and Iron Violet.

“We’ve been able to build a project that sits squarely at the confluence of engineering, art, social enterprise, and watershed restoration,” Shively says. The result: What was once pollution is now being turned into a marketable product that will help fund further stream restorations.

BY THE NUMBERS

52,975 lbs of locally grown produce made its way into food pantries in southeastern Ohio through the Chesterhill Produce Auction and a partnership with Community Food Initiatives.

$310,000 PAID TO FARMERS through sales at the Chesterhill Produce Auction. Total Revenue at the auction was $374,000.

117,733 lbs OF WASTE was diverted from the landfill by Zero Waste Event Productions, which “zero wasted” 40 festivals in 8 states in 2019.

4.46 MILLION from grant funds, sales income, and other revenue came to our region through Rural Action’s Social Enterprises.

“None of us started out trying to make paint...That just emerged as a means to accomplishing our goal of bringing streams back to life. However, we’ve managed to change the problem of AMD (acid mine drainage) into a solution that moves us towards a cleaner, more sustainable environment.”

~ Michelle Shively
Director of Project Development, True Pigments
LEAVING A LEGACY THROUGH RURAL ACTION

JANE AND JOHN WOODROW HAVE LONG BELIEVED IN GENEROSITY, AND SHARED AN ABIDING LOVE FOR NATURE AND CONSERVATION. THAT LED TO THEIR DECISION TO DO SOME PLANNING ABOUT HOW TO CREATE A LEGACY OF SUPPORT FOR THE CAUSES DEAR TO THEIR HEARTS. HERE, JANE SHARES HER STORY OF LEGACY PLANNING.

WRITTEN BY JANE Z. WOODROW

Years ago, I can’t remember how many, my late husband, John, and I gave serious thought to charities. He believed in generosity, and that when we are generous things will come back to us—not in any direct way—but that the universe will treat us well. Having grown up in a family that might have been a bit stingy, this was a new but welcome idea to me. We did want our gifts to count and not be frittered away, and requests for money come in every day. We started by thinking about our values: prevention, education, and the environment were at the top of our list.

Once we had that clear vision based on our values, Rural Action was an obvious choice for us. We first saw Rural Action as a local way to support the environment. As we learned more about the work overall, we began to see the focus on education, on supporting individuals and communities in ways that might prevent further problems.

We began giving money to them every year, through our Giving Society Pledge. We wondered, though, about long-term sustainability for the organization. Many non-profits do not survive the transition to new leadership from that of the founders. Rural Action, through several CEOs has survived and stayed true to its mission and vision. Even before John’s death five years ago, we had a will drawn up that names Rural Action as an important charitable organization that will receive what may be a tidy sum after both of us pass on.

I have also set up an annuity with Rural Action as a beneficiary. That allows money to be taken out and given to Rural Action without penalty should they need it before I die. I feel proud of our ability to support Rural Action, and I’m glad that we spent time planning how to continue to support the work we value in our community. And I can attest to the validity of the belief that generosity brings intangible and even tangible rewards.

There are many ways that might prevent further problems.

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PLANNING FOR YOUR LEGACY

Planned gifts made to Rural Action allow you to create a legacy of support for the work you love. If you are considering a planned gift, please contact us to discuss the type of gift you would like to leave, or the work you would like to support through your legacy.

You may also share this information with your attorney or financial planner:

“I bequeath $_______ or ______% of my estate to Rural Action, Inc. 11350 Jackson Dr., The Plains, OH 45780.”

Have you planned a gift to Rural Action? We’d love to hear from you. Please give us a call at 740-677-4047 if you would like to discuss your planned giving. Thank you for your generosity and your concern for the future of the people of the region and the places we call home.

GUIDELINES FOR LEGACY PLANNING

1. Consult with your attorney or financial planner to discuss the potential benefits of a planned gift and how it can benefit you and your family.

2. Consider various types of planned gifts, such as bequests, charitable gift annuities, and charitable remainder trusts.

3. Obtain a qualified appraisal to determine the value of any property you wish to donate.

4. Consult with a qualified intermediary to facilitate the transfer of property.

5. Review your will and living trust documents to ensure that any planned gift is consistent with your overall estate planning goals.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR FUNDS:

Foundation for Appalachian Ohio Rural Action Fund for a Sustainable Future

WWW.APPLACHIANOHIO.ORG

Athens Foundation Communities of Hope Fund

WWW.ATHENSFUNDATION.ORG
Learn more about membership by visiting our website at www.ruralaction.org/join

[2019 RURAL ACTION MEMBERS]

Members are central and essential to the work of Rural Action, and we count on them for their leadership, advocacy, volunteerism, and financial support. The following individuals and organizations helped to sustain the organization this year and allow us to plan for the future. Learn more about membership by visiting our website at www.ruralaction.org/join

Abigail Haffelt
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Alan and Sue Boyd
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Steve Mokris
IN MEMORIAM

Mary Anne Flournoy left a legacy of caring, advocacy, service, wisdom, and love in action. Many of our lives are richer for having known her. Mary Anne Flournoy served in many capacities with Rural Action over the years: one of our founders, a Board President, a staff member, a donor, a visionary, a teller of truths and a dear friend and mentor to many.

Wife, mother, sister, and visionary philanthropist, Mary Anne Boone Flournoy passed away on Wednesday, October 23rd in Athens, Ohio. Mary Anne, or "Mab" as she was known to family and close friends, was a mentor and teacher to countless students and colleagues around the world. She dedicated her life to Truth-Telling. From teaching in the poorest inner-city and Appalachian elementary schools, to working with world leaders and renowned academics serving as Associate Director for International Studies at Ohio University, Mary Anne treated everyone equally, and held them all to the same high standard.

Devoted environmentalists, Mary Anne and beloved husband Don created the Sugar Bush Foundation in 2005 to foster university-community collaboration in environmentally sustainable economic development of Appalachian Ohio. Together they maintained a farm, forest and gardens of some 400 acres, powered it with solar panels, and protected it with conservation easements.

Mary Anne was a fierce supporter and defender of anchor social justice non-profits locally, chairing the boards of Rural Action and Planned Parenthood, and serving in multiple leadership roles at Christ Lutheran Church in Athens. Globally, Mary Anne ran teacher exchanges to Southern Africa and sponsored her friend and former OU colleague Prisca Nemapare to create the Zienzele Foundation for AIDS orphans and widows in Zimbabwe. Leadership was Mary Anne’s true gift and calling. She taught and mentored generations of young women and men – many of whom now lead the organizations of our founders, a Board President, a staff member, a donor, a visionary, a teller of truths and a dear friend and mentor to many. 

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WE THANK THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS WHO HONORED MARY ANNE THROUGH MEMORIAL GIFTS TO RURAL ACTION IN 2019: GARRETT AND CECILIA BOONE, SARA GILFERT, AND DEBBIE AND JIM PHILLIPS.
**FUNDERS + SPONSORS**

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*Ohio Environmental Council*  
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Call us at 740.677.4047 to learn about opportunities to become a program sponsor. Sponsorships are available for a 12-month period or for a single event.

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**2019 FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

**ASSETS**

$579,907  
$468,059  
$1,402,993  
$145,595  
$209,431

**LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS**

$294,410  
$270,176  
$1,402,993  
$209,431  
$265,444

**EXPENSES**

$2%  
$19%  
$79%  
$70%  
$15%

**REVENUE**

$15%  
$15%  
$70%  
$3,033,892  
$3,006,773

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