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.

See where we work on page 5. 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 across the region.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- PAGE 2 About Rural Action
- PAGE 3 Letter From the CEO and Board Chair
- PAGE 4 How We Work
- PAGE 5 Where We Work
- PAGE 6-7 What We’ve Gotten Done Together
- PAGE 8-9 Sustainable Agriculture
- PAGE 10-11 Environmental Education
- PAGE 12-13 Ohio Stream Restore Corps
- PAGE 14-15 Sustainable Forestry
- PAGE 16-17 Entrepreneurial Communities and Social Enterprise
- PAGE 18-19 Watershed Management
- PAGE 20-21 Zero Waste
- PAGE 22-23 Sustainable Energy Solutions
- PAGE 24-25 Rural Action Giving Society and in Memoriam
- PAGE 26 Board of Directors
- PAGE 27 Staff and AmeriCorps Members
- PAGE 28-29 Support the Work You Love
- PAGE 30 Funders and Sponsors
- PAGE 31 Financial Information

We hope you enjoy Rural Action’s 2018 annual report.

If you like numbers, there are statistics that describe the impact of our work together. If you want to dive a little deeper, we have some in-depth looks at ways people are working together for solutions that build resilience and hope. We hope you will find some inspiration in these pages, and even share what you find here with a friend.

The world is a beautiful and a troubled place. We hear on a daily basis about increases in anxiety and depression, and the ways that we are separated from one another. We are buffeted by political and sociological divisions that are driving us apart from one another.

Local community development helps us move past those divisions. And the simple act of taking action that matters and that builds something together helps to develop confidence, and power, and connects us to real hope.

2018 was a year of significant transition for Rural Action. We’re grateful to our former CEO, Michelle Decker for her leadership, strength and passion for the work, and wish her great success in her new endeavors. 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.

In a wonderful development, we also welcomed our founding Executive Director Carol Kuhre in a new capacity. Carol is serving as a VISTA volunteer and sifting through the treasures in our library and our file drawers to build an archive and develop curricular materials that tell the story of Rural Action. Stay tuned. Thank you for being part of this work.

Sincerely – Mark and Debbie

“WE HAVE THE WORLD TO LIVE IN ON THE CONDITION THAT WE WILL TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT, AND TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT, WE HAVE TO KNOW IT, AND TO KNOW IT AND TO BE WILLING TO TAKE CARE OF IT, WE HAVE TO LOVE IT.” ~ WENDELL BERRY
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 CENTERS 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—aid 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 local solutions, several years ago we began working with 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

WHERE WE WORK

Rural Action has 5 offices located on the ground in communities where we work. In 2018, Rural Action reached 59 Ohio counties, 29 directly through Rural Action programs. Twenty-Four counties we worked in are designated Appalachian counties by the Appalachian Regional Commission. Additionally, 30 counties were served through our Ohio Stream Restore Corps partners and Zero Waste Event Productions, LLC. In 2018, Rural Action also worked and collaborated in 6 other states including West Virginia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Tennessee, and Illinois through Zero Waste Event Productions, LLC., and regional partnerships.
WHAT WE’VE GOTTEN DONE TOGETHER
SINCE 2009, WITH OUR MEMBERS + PARTNERS...

1.7 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.

89,000 YOUTH & ADULTS
have been educated on the wonders of our natural assets, better environmental practices, and outdoor skills and knowledge.

INCREASED RECYCLING TO 24.7%
Since 2009, with the help of partners and engaged citizens, the recycling rate has more than doubled in Athens and Hocking Counties, the primary focus area of Rural Action’s Zero Waste program.

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).

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.

$985,357
have been leveraged through our Ohio Stream Restore Corps program in cash funding. Additionally, $279,678 of in-kind donations have been raised to support local community development through AmeriCorps partnerships.

11,200 VOLUNTEERS
have been recruited, serving more than 53,000 hours supporting organizations and programs in communities of need.
By the Numbers

15,382 LBS of locally grown produce was processed and delivered to 6,540 students at 18 schools across six southeast Ohio districts. This was only possible with the help of volunteers who spent 700 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 in 2018.

$305,020 was generated by the Chesterhill Produce Auction in gross sales. In 2018, the auction supported 190 growers from 15 Ohio and 6 West Virginia counties.

19,920 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.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

In April of 2018, Rural Action hosted its 4th annual School Day at the Chesterhill Produce Auction (CPA). The event is an all day educational field trip for 2nd graders with a focus on local food systems and sustainability. School Day activities give students the opportunity to develop skills through experiential learning. Throughout the day, they learn about the importance of local food production and they can see first-hand where some of the produce comes from that ends up in their schools through Rural Action’s Farm to School project. In 2018, 369 students participated in School Day at the auction, representing 7 schools from 3 districts in Athens and Morgan counties.

School Day features 6 stations led by Rural Action and partners: Live Healthy Appalachia, Community Food Initiatives, and Rural Action’s Environmental Education and Zero Waste programs. The day gives students a chance to learn how fun (and hard) farming is by working together to plant their own row of beans. Additionally, they learn about zero waste and composting practices, beneficial insects such as butterflies and bees, participate in a cooking demonstration led by Live Healthy Kids, where the 2nd graders showed off the food and nutrition knowledge they learned all year in their Live Healthy Kids classes. They even learn about philanthropy while visiting the auction.

At the mock auction station, CPA growers and auctioneers discuss some of the food access issues that inspired the founding of the auction and the impact that the auction has had on their community since it was founded in 2004. After the students learn about the history of the auction and the importance of supporting local businesses, they participate in a mock auction where they each “bid” on a half-peck box of local produce. Once the auction is over, they have the opportunity to give back to those in need by donating each box they “won” to Community Food Initiatives’ Donation Station at School Day at the CPA. Over 400 lbs. of food were donated by students to CFI for use in local food pantries.

With the support of our partners, sponsorships from local businesses in Athens and Morgan counties, and Rural Action Members, School Day grows each year, reaching more kids in the region. Each child receives a School Day T-shirt, eats local food while at the CPA, and takes home a tomato plant they can care for, growing their own produce during the summer. Through events like School Day, Rural Action contributes to cultivating the next generation of citizens who care deeply about the world they inhabit, and feel empowered to be active participants in their own health, and the health and resiliency of their communities.

“I feel the most important thing we can do as a community, county, state, and nation is to raise our children by teaching them the importance of investing in the future. Sustainable agriculture is one critical factor in doing so as land, especially crop land, is one natural resource that no one is making more of. Therefore, I am honored to be a part of CPA School Day and highly recommend everyone participate in them and finding out what they are all about!”

~ Tonya Dodd, Auctioneer
When we think of citizen science, we think of an Athens High School (AHS) student wading out into the school pond, chest deep, in search of macroinvertebrates. This scene was part of our first school wide BioBlitz (a term for documenting as many organisms as possible in a given area within a given time period) in May 2018. Rural Action partnered with teachers Tony Riley and Angie McAfee to integrate the BioBlitz into their life sciences classes. Several experts volunteered their time to lead groups searching for birds, insects, plants, and fungi. Over the course of two days, nearly 200 tenth grade students documented 220 different species on campus. Tony Riley had this to say about the event:

“They felt that their work was of value to the local community. I sincerely believe that our partnership has been one of the most productive initiatives I’ve undertaken in my sixteen years as a professional educator. Our work to develop an engaging opportunity for AHS students to participate in citizen science has been a rewarding learning experience for both students and faculty.”

The Athens High BioBlitz is one piece of Rural Action’s larger BioBlitz project, the goal of which is to document as many species as possible living within the Athens Unit of Wayne National Forest. This data will help inform stewardship and management of the forest. Through this effort, 148 volunteers uploaded over 5,000 photo observations documenting 2,100 species across the Unit in 2018.

The community that forms around citizen science projects is one reason why Rural Action invests in them. In addition to the Bioblitz, we also lead a team of citizen science volunteers who monitor 50 nest boxes for birds such as the Prothonotary warbler, Tree swallow, and Eastern bluebird. This project grew out of the local bird watching community’s existing efforts—we noticed an opportunity to increase local populations of species that are declining nationwide and acted. In 2018, breeding pairs of Prothonotary warblers, Tree swallows, Eastern bluebirds, House wrens, and Carolina chickadees successfully raised dozens of young birds using nest boxes our team built.

Rural Action believes in local ownership of local assets. One of our region’s most important assets is the natural environment. This is why Rural Action’s Environmental Education Program has been building citizen science projects and engagement opportunities since 2015. Our citizen science work has been possible due to significant contributions from AmeriCorps members Sam Romeo, Tim Prange, Brett Smith, and Rural Action Environmental Education Program co-founder Joe Jennings.

They felt that their work was of value to the local community. I sincerely believe that our partnership has been one of the most productive initiatives I’ve undertaken in my sixteen years as a professional educator.”

~ Tony Riley

BY THE NUMBERS

6,839 PEOPLE (6,005 children and 834 adults) were reached through 337 environmental education programs during 2018.

125 ATTENDEES participated in our annual Appalachian Green Teachers Conference in 2018. These attendees work with an estimated 15,000 students across the region each year.

749 HOURS were spent by our team educating kids about environmental education. Most of these hours were spent being active outdoors in parks, land labs, forests, wetlands, and outdoor camps.

291 TEACHERS integrated environmental education into their classes with help from Rural Action, leading to more kids participating in hands-on experiential learning.
Rural Action places passionate and diverse national service volunteers with organizations in Appalachian Ohio where they serve for a yearlong term in rural communities. This effort is coordinated through our Ohio Stream Restore Corps (OSRC) AmeriCorps program. OSRC is one of the ways in which Rural Action is working to cultivate the next generation of leaders. In 2018, The Wilds in Muskingum County, a project of the Columbus Zoo, became an OSRC host site. At The Wilds, OSRC member Taylor Snelick is serving and getting things done through restoration ecology.

Most people know The Wilds as a place near Columbus where you can see rhinos and giraffes wandering through the fields of Ohio, but OSRC member Taylor Snelick will happily tell you there’s much more to it than that. While the exotic animals are certainly a draw for tourists, most of The Wilds’ land is actually devoted to environmental restoration work, after extensive pre-regulatory surface mining destroyed most of the region’s forests.

In large part, this destruction was caused by an enormous dragline excavator known as “Big Muskie.” As Taylor is quick to acknowledge, “Big Muskie had an important role in providing power to American towns and businesses; nevertheless, its environmental impact was extreme. The sheer weight of the machine compacted the soil so severely that even today, most native trees can’t take root.” This created a challenge which Taylor, as a new arrival in The Wild’s Restoration Ecology department, is helping to address: how do you “restore” an ecosystem when you can’t go back to how things were before?

Before The Wilds organization as we know it existed, restoration efforts involved planting non-native shrubs - primarily autumn olive - to prevent erosion and restore some semblance of the old environment. That approach backfired. As it turns out, autumn olive is extremely invasive, and it’s also inhospitable to imperiled grassland-breeding bird species. Today, the Restoration Ecology department focuses on removing the rampant autumn olive shrubs and giving a foothold to those native plants that will still grow in the dense Wilds dirt: mostly warm season grasses and other prairie plants such as milkweed that support native wildlife.

When Taylor is not out in the field, she gets a chance to play with the Wildlife Department’s trained hellbender salamanders from time to time, and she’s officially chainsaw-certified, which is her second-favorite AmeriCorps experience so far, after the hellbenders.

“Big Muskie had an important role in providing power to American towns and businesses; nevertheless, its environmental impact was extreme. The sheer weight of the machine compacted the soil so severely that even today, most native trees can’t take root.” ~ Taylor Snelick
SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

Rick and Jan Felumlee, along with their children Elijah and Emma, own and operate Mayapple Farms, a small forest farm located in Muskingum County, Ohio. The Felumlees are committed to using sustainable, organic, and low-impact methods to produce a unique variety of forest-farmed products, including several species of gourmet mushrooms, medicinal herbs and native nursery planting stock, as well as culinary herbs and vegetables.

In addition to striving to be a supportive and collaborative member of their local food community, Mayapple Farms is also committed to supporting the conservation of at-risk native plants, including species like American ginseng, goldenseal, bloodroot, and black cohosh. By intentionally propagating, planting, and harvesting these species on their farm, the Felumlees are helping to replace an unsustainable wild resource with sustainably cultivated alternatives.

Rick and Jan began laying the groundwork for Mayapple Farms starting in 2014 when they planted wild-simulated ginseng as a hobby. In the years since they’ve been steadily planting, and slowly growing their hobby into a small farm business. They’ve sought to diversify their farm by growing a mixture of conventional crops like vegetables and herbs, along with forest-farmed crops. Seeking additional information to support their farm goals, they became familiar faces at Rural Action’s 2018 forest-farming events and have also participated our Site Assessment and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) Management projects.

The Felumlees are a great example of how Rural Action’s Forestry education and assistance work can help landowners pursue and achieve their forest-farming and land management goals. In 2018, our Sustainable Forestry Program conducted 25 Forest Site Assessments and completed 21 NTFP Management Plans for landowners in Ohio and West Virginia.

These efforts have helped contribute to the sustainable management of more than 2,000 acres of forestland in the Appalachian region, as well as supporting sustainable income opportunities through NTFP production and stewardship.

“The educational and networking opportunities, along with the technical assistance, we’ve gained working with Rural Action has played a central role in helping us transition our forest farm from a hobby into a business.”

~ Rick Felumlee

BY THE NUMBERS

- **422** landowners attended workshops and events led by Rural Action’s Forestry program learning about sustainable management, growing non-timber forest products such as American ginseng, goldenseal and mushrooms as well as available markets.
- **7,533 LBS** of pawpaws and walnuts were aggregated and processed through the Chesterhill Produce Auction expanding on a pilot project last year that began in 2017. Items are sold to larger companies seeking wild harvested forest products.
- **21** management plans covering over 2,000 acres in Ohio and West Virginia, were developed for forest landowners to help support the production of high-value forest herbs and other specialty forest crops in 2018.
- **$60,165** of locally crafted wood products were sold through Rural Action’s Chesterhill Produce Auction in 2018 resulting in a 40% increase over 2017 sales. Locally handcrafted wood products are becoming an important draw for customers at the auction.
ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Rural Action’s Entrepreneurial Communities approach emphasizes local organizing and local leadership to create a long term support system for businesses of all sizes, products, and stages of growth in Appalachian Ohio. We believe that communities have many talented people that are running or want to run a business, and every community has people that want to see their local businesses thrive. In 2018, Rural Action began organizing citizens in Amesville, McArthur, Nelsonville, Logan, New Straitsville, and Pomeroy with the goal of using local leadership and knowledge from existing community members to support and grow local business. Each community is organized into an “E-Team.”

The Amesville E-Team wanted to know more about their local businesses, so they organized the Amesville Business Bonanza, the first-ever gathering of small business owners in the Amesville area. Each entrepreneur that attended had the chance to share their story of why they liked doing business in the community and identified their top business assistance needs.

From this event, the Amesville E-Team, with help from Rural Action’s community coach was able to create a follow-up plan to increase the visibility of these businesses through a branding and marketing campaign. Hosting the Business Bonanza, investing in improved marketing for local entrepreneurs, increasing fresh local produce, and raising funds through the microlending platform KIVA are just a few of the positive steps that the Amesville E-Team took in 2018.

“We’re as much about supporting the existing businesses here in Amesville as we are about bringing in new ones. Working through the project, I have learned that we need to make sure these businesses are connected to the community and that they have what they need to carry on.”

~ Lynne Genter

Rural Action is proud to be partnered with the wonderful communities of Southeast Ohio on this journey to grow an entrepreneurial network. By supporting dedicated communities like Amesville, and all of our core team members, we are working to bring economic justice to the region.

BY THE NUMBERS

35 BUSINESSES were surveyed across the six communities that Rural Action is working in. These in-depth surveys have influenced each community’s plans for supporting new and existing local businesses.

50 PARTICIPANTS networked across three regional meet-ups hosted by Rural Action that were designed to help local entrepreneurs connect and share experiences in their communities.

$5,000 in zero-percent interest Kiva loans were facilitated for two regional businesses to expand and improve operations. Kiva is a microlending platform that crowdfunds loans for businesses. Rural Action began endorsing loans on the platform in 2018.

22% GROWTH in revenue was generated by Rural Action’s two signature social enterprises: The Chesterhill Produce Auction and Zero Waste Event Productions, LLC., keeping more dollars local and supporting local entrepreneurs.
“It is amazing to see this facility come together. What started as a crazy idea in a watershed meeting, and for years was jars in the lab, is now a working water treatment plant. It’s incredible what a partnership of dedicated individuals can accomplish.”

~ Dr. Guy Riefler

In 2018, Rural Action, Ohio University, and other community partners celebrated the beginning of operations at a new Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) Paint Pigment Treatment System in Corning, with the ultimate goal of restoring a dead stream and bringing together the community through engineering, art, and watershed management.

In Ohio, more than 1,300 river miles are impacted by AMD. High concentrations of metals like iron and aluminum, along with highly acidic water make it difficult for fish and aquatic organisms to survive. Reclamation projects managed by Rural Action have improved 74 stream miles to a healthy pH of 6.5 or better. As a result, native fish and aquatic bugs are returning.

Through years of planning and working in partnership, a process has been created to turn iron oxide sludge, an AMD pollutant that exists from pre-regulation mining, into a valuable paint pigment by utilizing a water treatment system to capture and remove the iron oxide, offering a treatment system that will pay for itself. Many water quality gains have been made in the Sunday Creek Watershed, however, two large mine discharges remain. One is located at the park in Corning where the new treatment system is located and another is downstream near Millfield, Ohio. Each site spews nearly 1,000 gallons of acidic mine water into Sunday Creek every minute, 365 days a year. These two discharges impact more than half of the main stem of Sunday Creek and continue to leave much of the stream impaired. The current system is still at the research scale and won’t significantly improve Sunday Creek’s water quality overall, but the team is already seeking funding for a full-scale treatment plant within the watershed.

This project came to life through a collaborative partnership between Dr. Guy Riefler, a professor in the Russ College of Engineering at Ohio University, who designed the treatment system; artist and Ohio University professor John Sabraw who helped refine the pigment processing; and Rural Action, who has provided water quality monitoring data and support, helped write grants to secure funding, and serves as the community liaison for this project. Additional partners include the Sugar Bush Foundation, Richard Dickerson, the Village of Corning, Corning History Group, Ohio Department of Natural Resources – DMRM, and Gamblin Artists Colors. The first run of AMD paint was completed by Gamblin Artists Colors in 2018 and more pigment will be sent their way in 2019. This is an exciting endeavor for the organizations involved as we continue moving this project forward, with the promise of a cleaner Sunday Creek on the horizon.
Where Ohio University and the City of Athens had a problem with dumpsters and curbsides overflowing with discarded items, community members and organizations saw opportunity. Every spring around the weekend of Ohio University graduation, thousands of students move out of their homes, leaving a large portion of their belongings behind, up to 80% of which can be reused or recycled. Since 2015, Rural Action has coordinated the Ohio Student MoveOUT, involving dozens of community partners to find new outlets for all of the household goods, food, clothing, furniture, and more that are disposed of, diverting them from the landfill, to either serve people in need or be sold in local thrift stores.

Since 2015, 240 box trucks of recovered materials equaling 62 tons have been collected for repurposing and 300 mattresses have been recycled. Volunteers have contributed 9,544 hours of time. The initiative has grown each year to include up to 10 city-wide drop-off donation sites staffed by 150 employees and volunteers representing dozens of local nonprofit organizations.

Sue Righi, a longtime resident of southeast Ohio, was dismayed at the amount of usable items she saw going to waste. “I became involved in MoveOUT to reduce the amount of trash being sent to the landfill. To me, the important thing is that we are curbing the greenhouse gas emissions that result from all of this stuff being thrown away.”

In 2015, Sue began a project called Athens MoveOUT Recovery Effort, or AMORE. Even with all of the positive results that come from staffing drop-off locations throughout the City, lots of usable things still end up at the curb ready to be thrown away. AMORE volunteers receive training and are sanctioned by law enforcement to glean reusables from piles and dumpsters. It has taken time and lots of elbow grease to make AMORE a sustainable program, but after four years in the running, it has become solidified as an important part of the overall initiative.

The Ohio Student MoveOUT process has created and strengthened robust partnerships where organizations and individuals positively impact the waste stream and equitably distribute items to benefit the people of southeast Ohio. Sue finds that one of the most notable effects has been on collaboration between different groups. “I really appreciate the sense of community building that Rural Action has brought to the effort. Without so many different people coming together, none of this would get done.”

**ZERO WASTE**

BY THE NUMBERS

90 MATTRESSES were recycled locally through the ongoing Student MoveOUT partnership that works to divert waste during Ohio University’s annual move out each May.

19 MASTER RECYCLERS were trained through a new Master Recycler Program at Rural Action. These individuals work as volunteers to educate and engage their communities on zero waste practices.

7 BUSINESSES and organizations renewed their Zero Waste Pledge goals for the second or third year. We applaud the commitment that these businesses have made, taking a long-term approach to waste reduction as part of their business model.

4,404 LBS of waste were avoided altogether at events by borrowing Rural Action’s reusable dishware or purchasing their own with our assistance.

“I became involved in MoveOUT to reduce the amount of trash being sent to the landfill. To me, the important thing is that we are curbing the greenhouse gas emissions that result from all of this stuff being thrown away.”

~ Sue Righi
Appalachian Ohio has a rich history providing abundant energy resources to fuel the nation’s cities and towns. Generations of hard-working coal miners proudly supported the development of modern-day America, but many communities have been left behind as the energy economy shifts away from fossil fuels in favor of cheaper and more flexible natural gas, solar and wind. As U.S. coal consumption continues to fall, power producers continue to shutter coal-fired units, impacting many Appalachian communities sustained economically by the industry.

For many years, Rural Action has supported the transition to clean and renewable energy through a number of projects and initiatives including a member-led energy committee. Smart and sustainable energy solutions are a priority for our membership, and at the end of 2018, Rural Action took an important step forward in its commitment to sustainable energy by acquiring UpGrade Ohio and establishing the Sustainable Energy Solutions Program.

Upgrade formed in 2014 as a special project of the Southeast Ohio Public Energy Council (SOPEC). Upgrade Ohio became a 501c3 non-profit organization in 2016, led by Sarah Conley-Ballew as Executive Director. UpGrade worked in Athens and the surrounding counties to connect people with local resources to reduce energy use and to access renewable energy solutions. Among its accomplishments, UpGrade Ohio competed in the Georgetown University Energy Prize (GUEP) through 2015 and 2016 as the official organization for Athens County. Through this effort, they helped the county reduce energy usage by nearly 3 percent, resulting in $5 million dollars in collective savings and propelling local efforts into the national spotlight. Additionally, UpGrade worked with Ohio University Credit Union to provide 0% interest loans through a hybrid and electric vehicle loan program. Through the program, 71 loans were issued.

Much of Upgrade Ohio’s work will continue as Rural Action’s Sustainable Energy Solutions (SES) Program. Through SES, Rural Action will work to support initiatives that accelerate clean energy development in Appalachian Ohio, focusing on efforts that scale up energy efficiency, renewable energy, and clean transportation initiatives.

“Joining Rural Action will help scale up community-based clean energy programming and grow collaborative partnerships and new initiatives. I am excited to continue this important work as part of Rural Action’s team.”

~Sarah Conley-Ballew

INTRODUCING SES

As we build our Sustainable Energy Solutions program, we want to hear from you! Contact our program director, Sarah Conley-Ballew at sarah@ruralaction.org or 740-677-4047 to share your clean energy ideas.
2018 GIVING SOCIETY

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 Giving Society members have made multi-year pledges that help sustain the organization and allow us to plan for the future. For more information on the Giving Society call us at 740-677-6047 or visit our website at www.ruralaction.org/giving-society

Charlie Adkins
Meri and Mim Almqquist
Tania Basta
Terry and Wanada Baxter-Potter
Mary Ann Borch
Jack and Sandy Botlce
Elizabeth Bow
Dave Beauvais and Myca Haynes
Gillian and David Berchowitz
Cynthia and Ron Birt
Chuck and Carol Blyth
Shawna Bolin
Chad and Kirsten Botlce
Jen and Jeremy Bowman
Sue and Alan Boyd
Mike and Jane Broecker
Linda and Kenneth Button
Richard and Laurie Campbell
Kelly Capuzzi
Michael and Jo Carpenter
Merranda and Nate Chesser
Linda and Pete Clark
Brad and Lisa Cohen
Mary Costello
Micah Covert
Rick Camino
Philip and Heather Cantino
David and Elaine Dabelko
Rebecca Dale
Dale and Gloria Devol
Barbara Donohue
Carolyn Dryer
David Descutner
LJ Edmonds
Lenny and Lisa Elason
Mitch and Sue Farley
Leslie and Jack Fleming
Mary Anne and Dan Flournoy
Ann Fugate and Rich Tomus
Jan Gresinger
Felix Gagliano
Mary Ann and Norman Garber
Janet Garske
Sara Gilber
John Glazer and Faith Kнутsen
Lee Gregg
Sustaining members give monthly and help to ensure stability for Rural Action's work. Thank you to:

Steve Grimes
Amy and Bob Grove
Luther and Jeanne Haseley
Frederick and Teresa Hindman
Jay Hostetter
Mimi Hart
Herman Hill
Ralph and Janet Izard
Jane Jacobs
Mary Tracy Jageman
Maria and Scott Janda
Thomas Johnson
Beth and David Kaufman
Paul E. and Catherine Knoop
Kelli and John Kotowski
Carol and Bruce Kuhre
Tanya Kuhre
John and Char Kopchik
Tony Logan
Karoline and Neil Lane
Marissa and Nick Lautzenheiser
Robert E. Lazoruk
Don and Sally Linder
Svend Lindskold
Marla and Randy Longenecker
Susan Loughead
Michael and Sheila Mark
Debra McBride
Tom McGee
Sarah Milligan
Danny Moates
John Molinaro
Ann Moneypenny and Michael Kleinman
David and Chris Knisely
Cal and Laura Miller
Michele Papal and David Drabold
Paul Patton and Michael Pistrui
Debbie and Jim Phillips
Jennifer Pauwels
Melissa Pence
Kerry Pigman
Mary Anne Reeves
Alynn and Marsha Reilly
Kristin and Chip Rice
Sallie Anne Roberts
Samantha Rommel
Don and Jane Richter
Jo Ellen Sherry
Janalee Stock
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Allan and Corrine White
Carolyn T. and Chris Wilson
Robert and Mary Wood
Bob Eichenberg and Cecilia Rinaldi
Gary Goosman and Mary Ann Westendorf
Eric Fenstermaker and Nancy Manning
Christopher Feger and Ana Rosado-Feger

Helen Steere Horn died April 29, 2018. She was born in 1932 in Haverford, PA. She was a member of the Religious Society of Friends from an early age, educated in both public and Quaker schools. In her 20’s, Helen worked in post-war Europe for the American Friends Service Committee. On her return, she taught high school English and History and married David Horn. They spent two years on a rice growing project in West Africa with AID, and on their return, settled on a cattle farm in Athens County. Helen developed a resource directory encouraging the use of volunteers and field trips to enrich learning in Athens County, and through that work, more than 100 people volunteered in local rural schools in a single year. Helen interviewed elderly women from the county’s mining areas about their lives, wrote up the highlights of their stories, and together with Connie Winters staged dramatic readings of their stories. A video of the production is now available at the Athens Historical Society. A committed pacifist, Helen helped staff the Appalachian Peace and Justice Network, and People for Peace and Justice. She did anti-war organizing throughout her life, and refused to pay federal taxes that went for military spending. Helen was a poet, a counselor, a teacher, a writer, and a true friend to many. She wrote the story of her life’s inner journey, There is a Fountain: A Quaker Life in Process. She taught spiritual autobiography and was very active with the Athens Friends Meeting. Helen and David turned their farm into the Woodcock Nature Preserve, and she worked into her 80’s developing trails and gardening. Helen was a long-time member of Rural Action, and she will be dearly missed.

IN MEMORIAM

Helen Steere Horn

LESTER MARKS

IN ADDITION, WE RECEIVED A GIFT HONORING DR. GEORGE WOOD ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT

Members were lost in 2018

In addition to Helen Horn and Lester Marks, we also lost David Prince, William Kuhre, Kathryn Lorz, and Celeste Salzman in 2018. Our sympathy to their friends and family.

Individuals who were honored through memorial gifts to rural action in 2018

Bill Kuhre and Kathryn Lorz

In addition, we received a gift honoring Dr. George Wood on the occasion of his retirement.
SUPPORT THE WORK YOU LOVE

BECOME A MEMBER

Rural Action’s MEMBERS are its heart and soul. Having a MEMBERSHIP BASE means you have people who invest in your work, share their ideas, and roll up their sleeves. Some members choose a SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP through automated giving. Some members become MAJOR Donors and give more than $250 each year to keep us strong. Some members become multi-year donors and join Rural Action’s GIVING SOCIETY, pledging a major gift for 3 to 5 years. Some members even put us in their wills, making PLANNED GIFTS to ensure Rural Action continues to change the world for the better. Some members provide CAPITAL GIFTS so our facilities are clean, efficient, and vibrant homes for sustainable development. Please support the work you love, and talk with a staff or Board member about how you can help. Thank you!

VOLUNTEER WITH US

Each year, more than 1,000 people volunteer with us. We offer many kinds of opportunities, so whether you like to be in the field or in the office, we will find the right spot for you! When you volunteer 3 hours per year (or more) you will receive a 1-year membership.

EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

• National Service Through AmeriCorps, ComCorps, and VISTA
• High School & College Internships
• Plant Monitoring & Restoration on the Wayne National Forest
• Assisting at the Chesterhill Produce Auction
• Processing fresh vegetables for school children
• Helping at Rural Action Events
• Dumpsite & Stream Clean-ups
• Recycling at Festivals

MORE WAYS TO GIVE...

To support Rural Action’s work far into the future, we have established endowment funds with two community foundations. These endowments allow us to set aside funds for specific programming, secure against unforeseen hurdles, and help plan for organizational growth, all while protecting our longevity and legacy in Appalachian Ohio for generations to come.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR FUNDS:

Foundation for Appalachian Ohio Rural Action Fund for a Sustainable Future.

WWW.APPALACHIANOHIO.ORG

 Athens Foundation Communities of Hope Fund.

WWW.ATHENSFOUNDATION.ORG

LEAVING A LEGACY THROUGH RURAL ACTION WITH PLANNED GIVING BY JOHN AND JANE Z. WOODROW

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.

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.
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Appalachian Center for Economic Networks
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United States Department of Interior - Office of Surface Mining

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WANT TO BE A SPONSOR?
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.
KEEP UP WITH OUR WORK
RURALACTION.ORG