

Annual Report 2022



Rural Action
Thriving Communities, Healthy Environments

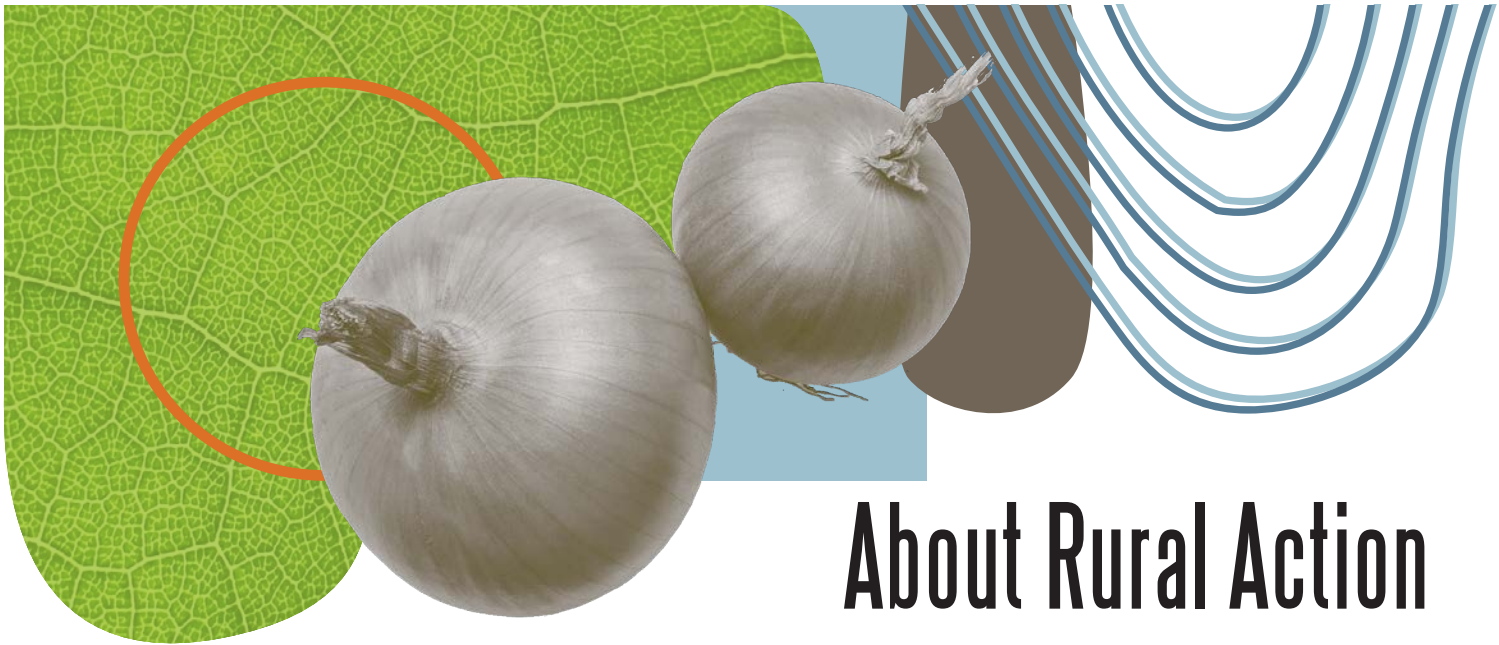


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About Rural Action

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 national service program, administered by Rural Action in partnership with more than a dozen Ohio organizations.

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Program Areas



SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Each year we engage with hundreds of small, diversified farmers and landowners to understand their needs and provide tools to increase food production while reducing risk, enhancing profitability, and restoring local ecosystems. Our food access projects deliver healthy food to people who might not be able to find or afford it otherwise, and money is spent with local farmers.

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

By providing resources for woodland owners we help them identify alternative income opportunities, like forest farming of ginseng, goldenseal, and other forest botanicals, conduct land restoration projects with native plants, and mitigate invasive species that can adversely affect forest health and diversity.

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

We work to catalyze clean energy development by supporting regional efforts to scale up energy efficiency, renewable energy, and clean transportation. We support a clean energy economy that provides living-wage jobs and the growth of a modern manufacturing sector that attracts and retains our skilled Appalachian workforce.

WATERSHEDS

Serving as a leader in stream restoration since 1994, we work with communities to provide watershed management services including chemical and biological water quality monitoring, watershed planning, restoration and protection management, and community organizing around water resources, helping to ensure access to clean water across our region well into the future.

ZERO WASTE

We promote the development of a zero-waste economy where product development prioritizes conservation of natural resources and product design incorporates ways to facilitate and encourage post-consumer reuse, repair, recycling, or composting, and discards become assets that benefit the people, the planet, and the local economy.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

We connect students and teachers with outdoor learning in Appalachian Ohio. By learning in nature, we help young people develop a sense of place and give them the tools to make informed decisions about their natural resources as well as evaluate their future career paths.

NATIONAL SERVICE

Appalachian Ohio Restore Corps members and VISTAs help educate youth and the public, restore, conserve, and preserve environmental resources, improve food distribution, support reduced waste and recycling initiatives, and support economic resilience through climate change mitigation and sustainability projects.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Social enterprise exists on a continuum that blends a market approach with a mission that helps the community and the environment. The triple bottom line approach of using business tools to foster prosperity, protect the planet, and benefit people is the sweet spot of social enterprise.

Our social enterprises include the Chesterhill Produce Auction, Zero Waste Event Productions LLC, True Pigments LLC, UpCycle Ohio Thrift, the Community Makerspace, and Appalachian Understories.

Letter From Leadership

Dear friends,

We hope you enjoy this report on Rural Action's work in 2022. The work we're engaged in together is having a positive impact in our region, and we are so pleased to be able to share some of these successes with you in our annual report.

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 strong relationships and real collaboration. We are so grateful to be able to work in a region that understands that — a region where people care more about solving problems than about who gets credit for it.

If you want to hear real stories about people making a difference, grab a cup of tea and settle in for some inspiration. People are working together to make a difference through projects as varied as historic preservation in McArthur to our work with Fellows from Zimbabwe and Tanzania. And if you want a quick glance at some statistics, you will find that too.

We are living in complex times. The challenges that are already present due to climate change, and the slow and bumpy recovery from a global pandemic impacts the work we do every day. There are big opportunities to support our communities and our region and to scale up the innovations that have been nurtured by caring people here at home. We can make a difference, in ways large and small, and we do it best when we work together.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about what we — all of us, including you — have accomplished together as part of Rural Action. Thank you for caring enough to be involved in creating solutions. We're grateful.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debbie Phillips".

Debbie Phillips
Chief Executive Officer



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Ann Borch".

Mary Ann Borch
Chair of the Board



By the Numbers



18 SITE VISITS

across 1,119 acres in nine counties and two states by the Sustainable Forestry team to assist landowners in nontimber forest product cultivation and sustainable land management

133,465 ACRES

of high quality wetland and stream restoration project sites identified in the Maumee River Watershed

45 HELLBENDER NEST BOXES

installed at three sites in the Walhonding Watershed



56 TOURS

provided by Appalachian Understories and

58 GUIDES AND INTERPRETERS

paid for sharing their skills and knowledge with the community

2,065 POUNDS OF LOCAL PRODUCE

donated through the Tuscarawas Donation Station and distributed to individuals and organizations

18,353 INDIVIDUALS

reached through CHaRM (Center for Hard to Recycle Materials) events and other recycling events that diverted

223,846 POUNDS OF MATERIAL

from the waste stream through the Zero Waste Program

450,000 DOLLARS

distributed to local farmers through the Chesterhill Produce Auction sales, produce purchasing for Buying Club, produce prescriptions, and produce distribution



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

Rural Action's community development approach is the result of decades of careful work to increase local control over the region's rich assets and to give power to the people who are committed to this place, whether for generations or new arrivals. Appalachian Ohio is still recovering from the effects of extractive industries, especially coal mining, which declined by the mid-twentieth century. Such industries resulted in widespread environmental degradation, unemployment, population loss, and weak economies that persist to this day.

To counter these forces, the region needs development from within that is consistent with its assets. Rural Action members have a goal of more equitable development and greater opportunities for the people of Appalachian Ohio. We believe achieving this goal requires the wide adoption of sustainable systems and practices in the region.

To do this, Rural Action brings people together to understand their options and support locally derived development and decision-making. We believe learning is essential to long-term change, from experts who have new models, to the wisdom within our communities. Educating young people on the region's natural history and heritage is a long-term strategy for ensuring good stewardship and job creation from natural resource assets. Once engaged and informed, Rural Action facilitates change by supporting communities to understand, map, and control their assets; build appropriate and accessible infrastructure; and connect those assets and infrastructure to markets both within and outside of the region.



Where We Work



- Appalachian counties served directly through Rural Action
- Additional counties reached through AmeriCorps partners
- Additional Ohio counties served through Rural Action social enterprises

Rural Action has six offices located on the ground in communities where we work. In 2022, Rural Action reached 39 counties in Ohio and neighboring states, 32 directly through Rural Action programs. Six additional counties were served through our Zero Waste program.



THRIFT STORE PROMOTES COMMUNITY, WASTE DIVERSION

Kylee Minick is proud to be part of a small but mighty team who diverted 222,600 pounds of material from the landfill last year — or over 110 tons, roughly the size of a blue whale — by way of materials sold and recycled at Rural Action's UpCycle Ohio Thrift Store and Community Makerspace at 751 W. Union St. in Athens.

Minick, an UpCycle sales associate, has watched the store grow and change since she first started working there in June 2021. The store and makerspace opened on Sept. 26, 2020, thanks to the efforts of seven community organizations that banded together to purchase the assets of ReUse Industries, which closed in February 2020.

She works at both the thrift store and makerspace, where she sorts items and assists customers. But she also helps in volunteer coordination — in fact, that's where her relationship with UpCycle began. She had no retail experience prior!

"We have a crew of our regulars who come in every Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday," Minick said. "We have a crew who's been volunteering with us for two years. That's how I got hired — I was a regular volunteer."

From Ohio University students to individuals looking to help out, UpCycle wouldn't have been able to divert so much waste from the local waste stream last year without its volunteers, Minick said. Rural Action's Zero Waste AmeriCorps cohort has been a huge help, too. Minick estimates around 30 people per year help process donations.

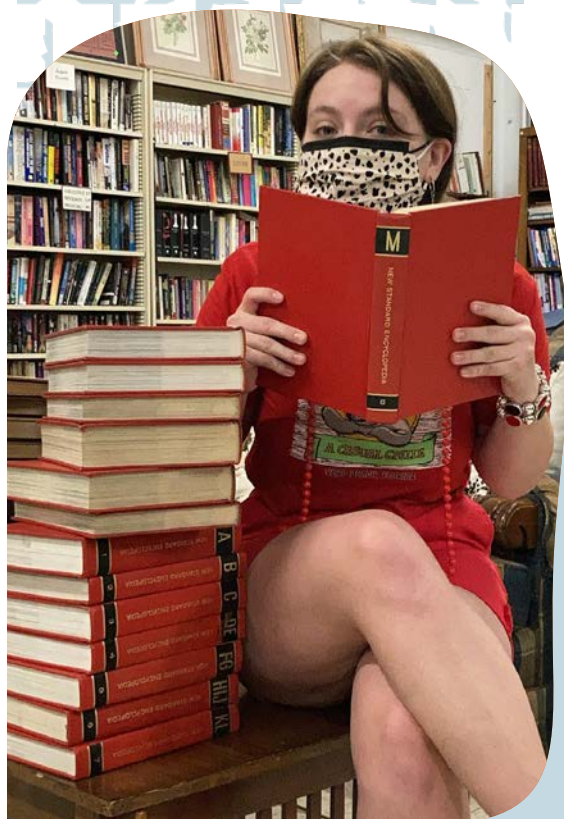
"At first, it was really hard to go through all the donations that we had with limited staff," Minick said. "And now since we have the AmeriCorps Zero Waste cohort, it's been a breeze."

Over their six months of service, AmeriCorps Zero Waste cohort member Rowan Fahl Matlack has noticed managing donations has become easier with a full cohort. A major part of Fahl Matlack's service is diverting waste and sorting recyclables.

"We do a lot of recycling. We make sure that as little goes into the trash as possible," Fahl Matlack said. "That's the important thing."

The intentional flow of materials and mission behind UpCycle Ohio aligns with Rural Action's long standing commitment to zero waste and the work the organization was already doing through initiatives such as the Zero Waste Pledge, zero waste event support, and hard-to-recycle collections — all through the Zero Waste Program, also located at the 751 W. Union St. location. UpCycle fit perfectly into the collaborations Zero Waste has been building upon for years.

UpCycle Ohio also serves as a testament to the power of a social enterprise to increase the scale of what the community can accomplish.





The thrift helps find a home for nearly any material and in doing so, has created opportunities for staff, volunteers, and anyone in the community to participate in the larger network of reuse and recycling.

Minick said social media has been useful in creating and fostering relationships with customers and volunteers. UpCycle has been incredibly successful reaching out to young people, locals, and university students alike, through its social media presence, specifically on Instagram (@upcycleohiothrift).

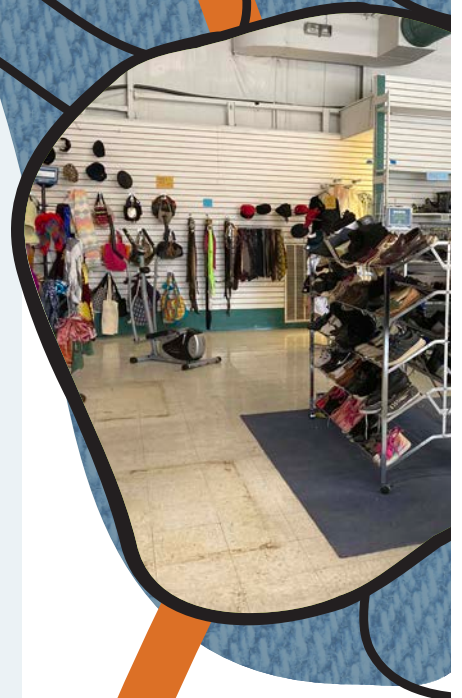
The thrift store has also hosted successful events, including a clothing swap that broke revenue records. The thoughtfulness from staff, volunteers, and customers has gone into every aspect of UpCycle — making it far more than a thrift store — it is a community space that supports the uniqueness and freedom of expression of every individual who walks through its doors.

Minick and others at the thrift work to make it a safe, accessible, and affordable place for people of all ages, sizes, incomes, and backgrounds. She appreciates the value of “old things” – extending the longevity of everyday objects – and being able to provide affordable items to people in need while reducing waste.

“We just want it to be a safe space for everybody to just be comfortable because everyone should be comfortable with who they are,” Minick said. “Every day I see someone and think, ‘I am excited to see what they are going to do with that.’”

For former UpCycle manager Sadie Meade, now Rural Action Workforce Development Director, “UpCycle Ohio is a space where both people and things grow.”

“It gives items a second and third chance to be cherished and used for years to come, and provides an environment for people from all walks of life to express themselves creatively, think more deeply about their relationship to objects, consumption, capitalism, and the circular economy,” Meade said.



FROM AFRICA TO APPALACHIA

Local problems require global solutions. Nobody realizes this better than Darlington Mafa, of Zimbabwe, and Felician Ezekiel, of Tanzania, whom Rural Action hosted as Community Solutions Fellows last year.

Each year, the United States Department of State welcomes over 100 emerging social innovators from different countries to the United States for a four-month learning and exchange opportunity with nonprofit organizations.

From Africa to Appalachia, Ezekiel and Mafa participated in a cultural and professional exchange in hopes for a better future. Bringing their skills to Ohio to share with Rural Action, they were able to develop professionally and personally, become a part of the Athens community, and serve as a major inspiration to staff.

But above all Ezekiel and Mafa found that southeast Ohio's sustainability problems mirror that of Sub-Saharan Africa's — and perhaps if the same problems transcend country, culture, and climate, we can work together on solutions, too. Both Ezekiel and Mafa are accomplished nonprofit leaders in their home countries.



Mafa is a social entrepreneur and founder of RimaAfrika Trust Zimbabwe, a nonprofit initiative that seeks to help marginalized and economically distressed communities adapt to climate change, diversify food systems for better nutrition, and achieve intentional climate justice.

Mafa is passionate about community agriculture, climate-smart agriculture, and modernizing agriculture in his country and across Africa. His work outside of his time with Rural Action consists of helping rural communities achieve food and nutrition security through handouts of vegetable seeds, startup support for gray oyster mushroom production, and partnerships with other nonprofits.

Mafa worked with the Rural Action Sustainable Agriculture program, who “made sure I got the best out of the experience,” he said. He was “shocked at the food system parallels that exist between southeast Ohio and Zimbabwe.”

“The sweet potatoes, the corn, soy beans, sorghum, and pumpkins are just the same,” Mafa said. “I also discovered some persimmons that were just different in color from the ones I grew up with at my grandmother’s rural home.”

For his fellowship practicum, he worked on three pillars: climate-smart approaches for sustainable food security; ways to improve farming enterprise health; transitioning farms into sustainable, profitable businesses; and sharing his culture.

The last pillar culminated in a community presentation at the Athens Public Library at the end of his fellowship. Alongside Ezekiel, Mafa shared agricultural initiatives and feasted upon a potluck dinner of Zimbabwean and Tanzanian foods, which demonstrated similarities and differences between the fellows’ and local food systems.

“We also had conversations about our traditions and shared interesting facts about our respective countries and our dreams for our nonprofit initiatives,” Mafa said. “I’m sure someone is trying out my people’s recipe of cooking fresh pumpkin leaves and peanut butter after preparing them like celery!” Mafa added.

“I definitely learned a little bit about American etiquette, sports, and experienced the music festivals firsthand,” he added. “From conversations with Debbie Phillips, Rural Action CEO, I also learned how to organize my nonprofit initiative in a more professional way and foster a culture of transparency and accountability.”

Mafa lived at the Firehouse Coop with other Rural Action staff and service members where “I shared our food culture and my way of life as an African and a Zimbabwean with them, on some nights I would try to teach them to dance like me.” Beyond cultural exchanges, he learned about seed saving, cover cropping and food system structure while on the ag team.

“I enjoyed learning new things about the world and I was really inspired by the intentional talks we had about race and ending racism that have become part of Rural Action’s work culture,” Mafa said. “They made me realize that as a majority in my own country I also have to play my part in easing any existing or potential tensions with the minorities of my society.”

He was very inspired by his experience. “The long-term vision for RimaAfrica’s Zimbabwe community reach and impact is inspired by the initiative, dedication, innovation, and team spirit exuded by Rural Action team and staff.”

Like Mafa, Ezekiel’s work also focuses on adapting to climate change and supporting African farmers.

Former Sustainable Forestry Program Director Karam Sheban said Ezekiel provided “some of the big inspirations of 2022” for the forestry team. Ezekiel leads a nonprofit called Ecowise that works with rural farmers who live along the edges of Mikumi National Park.

Specifically, Ezekiel helps farmers cultivate crops that are wildlife-resistant — elephant-resistant.



FROM AFRICA TO APPALACHIA CONT.

"On average, one farmer can farm four acres, which is enough to sustain them to give them food for the whole year," Ezekiel said. "And one herd of elephants can eat four whole acres per day. So we're trying to find how we can prevent elephants from entering the farms, and also finding alternative crops that elephants don't like, like sesame and mushrooms."

Ecowise also helps farmers take their crops to market, he added. Rural Action was his first choice for fellowship hosts, he said; he wanted to bring agroforestry practices home, as well as social enterprise systems.

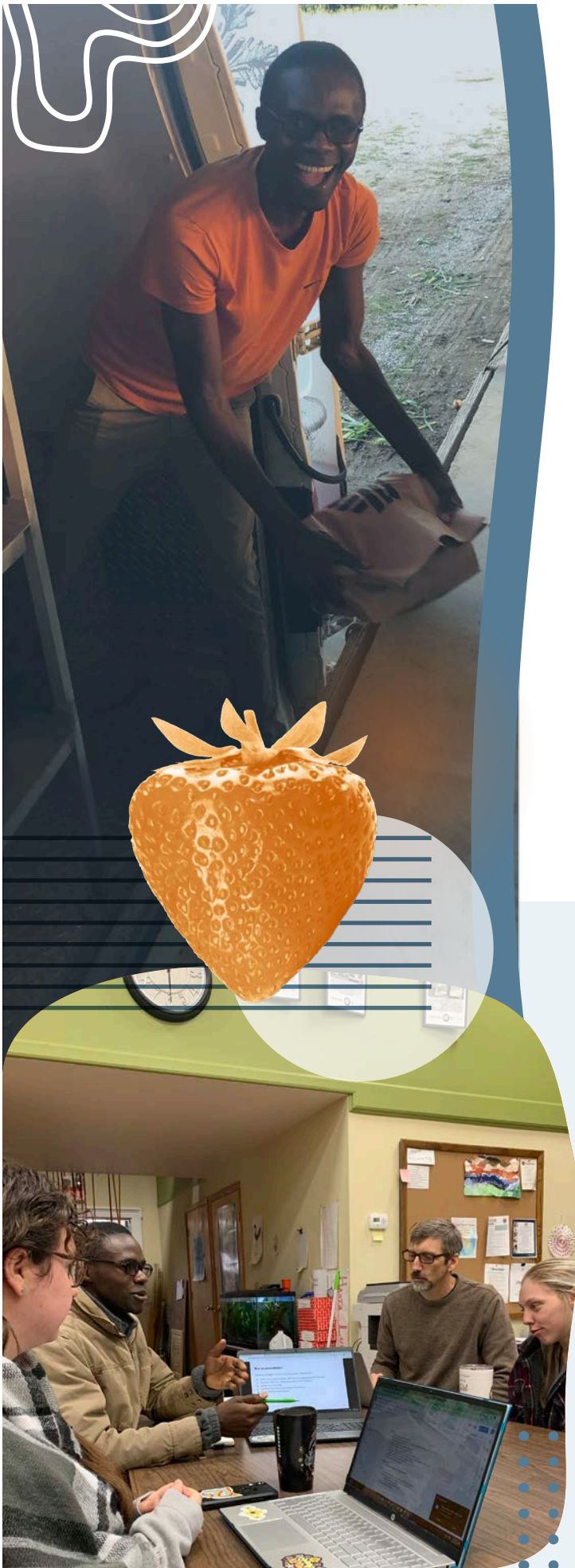
Both Ezekiel and Sheban see major parallels between southeast Ohio and Tanzania.

"Most of the issues we're experiencing are similar environmental challenges like climate change, which is a global issue right now," Ezekiel said. "And it's something that is mostly driven by socio-economic factors. Despite the fact that we differ in geographical and economic background, I can see the solutions that need to be addressed are almost the same."

"In many ways, Felician's work parallels the work we do here at Rural Action," Sheban added.

"Felician inspired us every day, and it was a tremendous privilege to have him here, working with us," Sheban said. "We were sad to see him go, but look forward to hearing all the ways his work continues to move him forward."

But Ezekiel won't be gone long — in the fall, he'll return to Athens County, Ohio to pursue a master's degree in environmental studies at Ohio University.





Previous Rural Action Community Solutions Fellows:

2022: Felician (Tanzania) and Darlington (Zimbabwe).

2019: Marcelita "Marce" Ponce de Leon (Peru), Sustainable Agriculture.

2018: Natalia Lozano-Broncales (Peru), Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry.

Former Sustainable Agriculture Program Manager Joe Barbaree visited Peru in 2019 to partner with Lozano-Broncales on beginning farmer work presentations.

2017: Antoine "Tony" Kabandana (Rwanda), Zero Waste program.

2017: Helena Goncalves (Brazil), Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry.

Former Sustainable Forestry Program Director Karam Sheban traveled to Brazil with Goncalves to share agroforestry practices with Amazonian Brazil nut harvesters.

2016: Zi Xiang Chan (Malaysia), Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry.



MAKING QUALITY FOOD ACCESSIBLE IN APPALACHIA

For the fourth year in a row, Rural Action helped provide thousands of produce prescriptions to Mid-Ohio Valley families to make healthy food — and healthy living — more accessible.

More than 5,000 bags of produce were provided to 285 households in two states, through the prescriptions program, providing fresh produce, recipes, cooking supplies, and more.

Of course, Rural Action didn't do it alone. Beginning in 2018, Rural Action has partnered with Hopewell Health Centers. Last year, this team provided 3,200 weekly prescriptions in Athens, Meigs, Hocking, and Washington counties in Ohio.

And beginning in 2020, a partnership with Coplin Health Systems, provided 2,017 weekly prescriptions to residents in Calhoun, Jackson Richie, Wirt, and Wood counties in West Virginia.

"It is humbling to hear the stories about their children who have limited access to food during the summer months, and to be able to witness the tears of gratitude as they get their food the first week," said Sarah Barton, Coplin Health Systems Senior Projects Manager. "We are so glad to partner with Rural Action in this work and help our communities become healthier."

Last year, this program resulted in over \$31,000 going into the pockets of local farmers, while providing fresh local food to people receiving the produce prescriptions, keeping money within the community and supporting local agriculture.

Produce prescriptions go beyond just produce; they also provide support and education. In 2022, 79 Hopewell patients received Healthy Pantry shares: a shopping bag with Rural Action's Healthy Home Consumer Guide, spices, cooking oil, knives, a can opener, a colander, a veggie peeler, and a cutting board.





Photo by Milton Lindsay

Follow the food from the CPA to the recipient:

Rural Action's Ag team purchases the produce at the Chesterhill Produce Auction.

The Ag team then bags it up into individual household bags of mixed produce — sometimes up to 200 bags per auction!

The Ag team then delivers the bags to each healthcare clinic that serves as a pickup site for patients (last year, we often included a seasonal recipe that utilized the produce distributed that week).

The West Virginia sites included health and cooking classes on the pickup days to provide wraparound support to patients.

"This program integrates education on how to cook healthy recipes, health education on hypertension, stroke and cancer, and community resources," Barton added. She expressed that she never anticipated the enormous impact produce prescriptions could have on participants and their communities.

"It is a joy to watch them grow, as they witness improvements in their health over the course of the ten weeks," she said.

*Funding for the program was provided by Sisters Health Foundation and the National Institute for Health.

MINELAND RECLAMATION REVIVES HISTORIC HOTEL

Thanks to collaboration between Rural Action and many partners, Vinton County's sole and historic hotel will once again be in operation at the heart of its county seat.

Hotel McArthur will become more than a historic landmark and remnant of the past at the intersection of State Route 93 and U.S. Route 50. Tentatively planned to be completed in 2025, it will become a boutique hotel with fewer than 20 rooms, and the only hotel in the area.

Built in 1839, the Hotel McArthur is the oldest structure in Vinton County that's still in use today, said Caleb Appleman, marketing director at Vinton County Convention & Visitors Bureau (VCCVB). The structure itself actually predates Vinton County's formation in 1850. The building even remains mysterious to the VCCVB itself, as few records exist to indicate ownership, initial floor plans, and usage. Ownership and usage has changed often over the years; from being a makeshift shelter for unhoused people, to a bar.

"For a lot of people, at least in McArthur, I think the hotel probably has been something you drive past — it's been that way for a lot of us," Appleman said. "It's been this interesting building that you pass, and you just don't know what's in it, you don't know the history, if it's a public building or what."



According to Appleman, after some sage advice, Rural Action helped rework VCCVB's application to secure the funds to restore the historic facility, alongside another piece of Vinton County history.

"We spent about a year researching pre-Ohio Department of Natural Resources records learning about the coal mines surrounding McArthur and the operations of the McArthur Brick Company that started in 1905," Appleman said. "The former brick plant is now owned by the Vinton County Park District and is planned to be a community park."

The Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition (RAC), another key partner in the project, is an interstate organization that develops innovative reclamation projects to bring about a more just transition for the region. Rural Action's Marissa Lautzenheiser said that Rural Action has been one of the core partners in RAC since its inception.

Rural Action and other RAC members, have been working collaboratively on AMLER projects for several years. AMLER is a relatively new program that focuses on projects that have economic development potential in areas that were affected by pre-regulatory mining (prior to 1977). The McArthur brick plant is the remediation component of the Vinton County's AMLER project, Appleman said. RAC assisted with a feasibility study for Hotel McArthur, and helped develop their application.



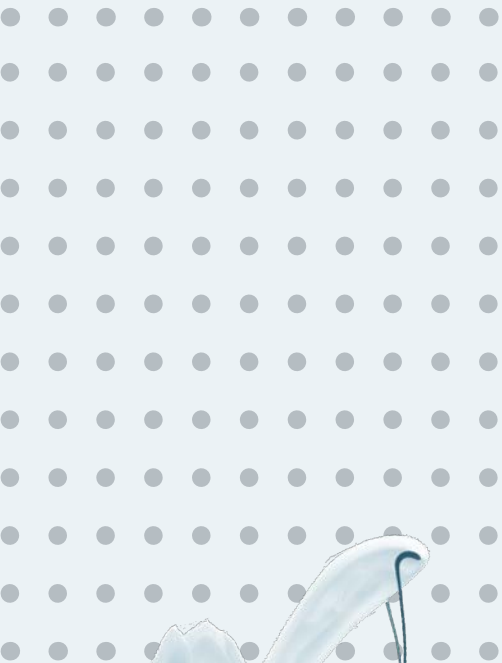
Rural Action approaches projects with an eye to how we can build from our assets to create opportunities. The AMLER program helps focus that approach on things that have often been seen as liabilities, and turns the story around. Instead of seeing an eyesore that needs to be cleaned up, this program allows us to see a building like the Hotel McArthur as a resource, find a way to draw the needed investment and create new possibilities for our communities. The Hotel McArthur fits that niche perfectly, and shows how we can work together with local communities to get things done.

The hotel will produce lodging tax income for the county, whereas currently the county relies on short-term rentals for its lodging tax. The revenue from lodging taxes can contribute to the general fund for the county as well as support the visitors bureau to drive economic growth for the area.

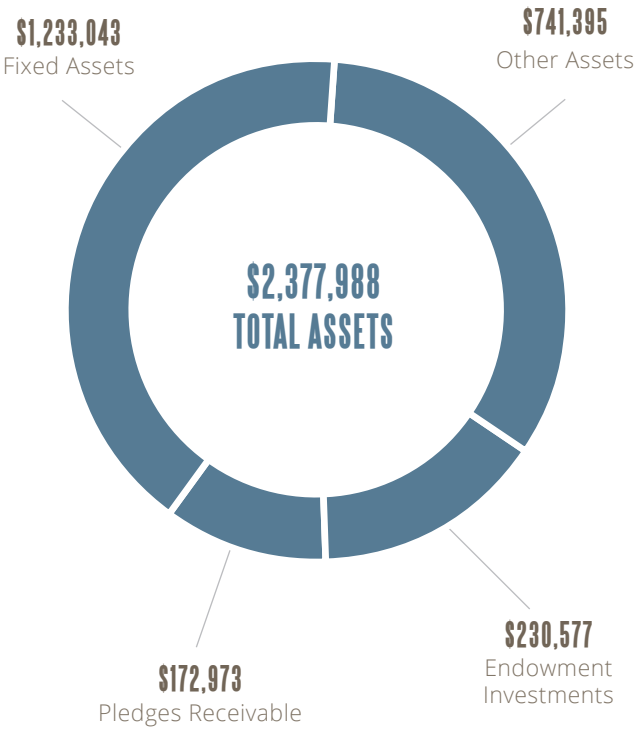
"I have several hopes for the hotel," Appleman said. "I'm really excited because for our community, the project will instill pride. I think that this will serve as sort of a catalyst for other businesses, too, to both want to come into the community, but also to put more effort into their own businesses and buildings."

"Many people might think of abandoned mineland reclamation as restoring the land," Lautzenheiser said. "But these efforts can also lead to restoring these pieces of history, many of which fell into dis-use during the 'bust' part of those 'boom and bust' cycles, and help to create more resilient local economies."

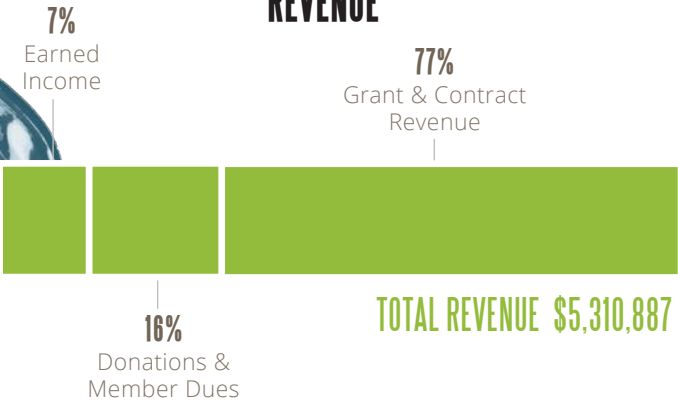
2022 FINANCES



ASSETS



REVENUE



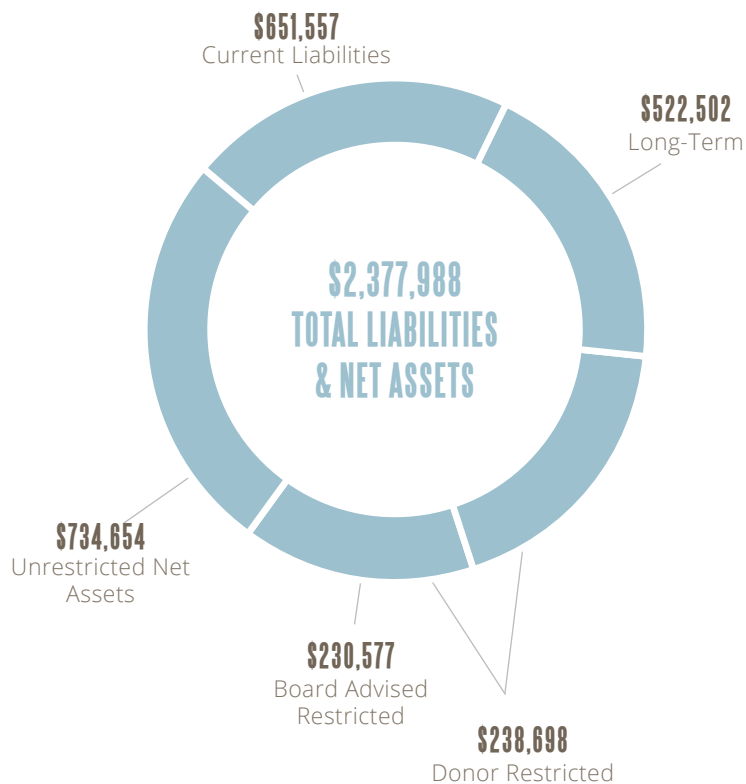
FUNDERS

Athens-Hocking-Vinton 317 Board
Athens-Hocking Solid Waste District
American Electric Power - Ohio
Appalachian Center for Economic Networks
Appalachian Regional Commission
Appalachian Sustainable Development
Appalachian Voices
Athens County Foundation
Athens County Land Reutilization Corporation
Buckeye Hills Regional Council
Camp Ot/Okwa
Central Appalachian Network
Central State University
Cincinnati Museum Center
Coplin Health
Corporation for National and Community Service

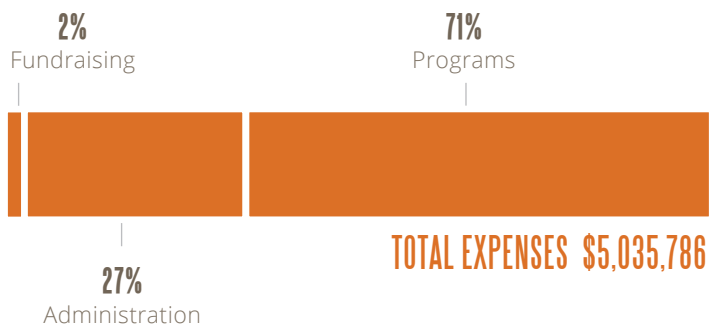
Crane Hollow Preserve
Dawes Arboretum
Earthshare of Ohio
Edge of Appalachia
Educational Foundation of America
Environmental Education Council of Ohio
Epstein Teicher Philanthropies
Foundation for Appalachian Ohio
Foundation for the Carolinas
Genie Solar Energy
Hocking Soil & Water Conservation District
J.M. Kaplan Fund
Joyce Foundation
Just Transition Fund
Kleinpenny Educational Fund
Licking County Parks District

Muskingham Valley Parks District
Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District
Ohio Department of Agriculture
Ohio Department of Natural Resources - Division of Mineral Resource Management
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
Ohio Farm Bureau Foundation
Ohio Health
Ohio Hill Country Heritage Area
Ohio University
Ohio State University Extension
Ohio's Winding Road
Osteopathic Heritage Foundation
Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS



EXPENSES



Raccoon Creek Watershed Partnership
 Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition
 Serve Ohio - Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism
 Sisters Health Foundation
 Stream & Wetlands Foundation
 Stuart's Opera House
 Sugar Bush Foundation
 Sugar Bush Valley LLC
 U. S. Department of Agriculture - Forest Service
 U. S. Department of Agriculture - National Institute for Food and Agriculture
 U. S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service
 U.S. Department of Agriculture - North Central Sustainable Agriculture & Education Program
 U. S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development

U. S. Department of Agriculture - Solid Waste Management
 U.S. Department of Energy - Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 United Campus Ministries
 United Plant Savers
 Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
 Wayne National Forest
 Yale University



Members & Donors

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 in 2022 and allow us to plan for the future. Learn more about membership by visiting our website at www.ruralaction.org/join.

You can find a list of all members and donors in the interactive version of the 2022 Annual Report at ruralaction2022.my.canva.site.

IN MEMORIAM

REV. JAN GRIESINGER

**from the obituary of Rev. Jan Griesinger*

The Rev. Jan Griesinger, longtime community activist and Director of United Campus Ministry came to Athens, Ohio in 1976. She helped lay the foundation for the LGBT Center at Ohio University, and her work with UCM expanded into many other kinds of justice organizing on the local, national, and international levels.

In 1979, she and her partner, Mary Morgan, bought land outside of Athens to co-found a women's intentional community, the Susan B. Anthony Memorial UnRest Home and Women's Land Trust, SuBAMUH.

Jan was exposed early to activism through her parents, who raised her to be independent, think critically, and "speak as though I had some idea of what I was talking about." She went door to door to mobilize opposition to the Vietnam War, was arrested at a draft resistance sit-in, and marched with Martin Luther King in an anti-war protest in 1968.

Jan believed in justice, and she believed in people. She nurtured generations of young people through the campus ministry. She supported many idealistic and passionate folks in finding ways to speak up and be heard. She was a mentor and a friend to many people in our region, and through her work helped our community to live into the vision of the beloved community.

Debbie Phillips was a staffer at the Appalachian Peace and Justice Network in the 90's, and shared a memory of Jan's mentorship and support of young leaders:

"I was a single mom, going to school full time and working 30 hours a week. One day, my young son fell asleep right before I needed to go to class. Jan told me that it was fine to let him sleep in my office, and she'd be happy to keep an eye on him so I didn't need to wake him up to trek off to class with me. It was so kind, and such a good example of the ways she would meet people where they are, and offer support in ways big and small. "

Jan was a longtime member of Rural Action, and her clear thinking, depth of caring, and strong voice will be missed.



IN MEMORIAM

SETH TEICHER

Written by Joe Brehm

On any given day over the past 12 years, I may have had the good fortune of seeing a child holding a salamander, tasting a wild plant, or swimming in a wild creek for the very first time. I've witnessed thousands of these beginnings for both kids and adults, privileged to the satisfying knowledge that because of the field trip or hike or summer camp, they are closer to the natural world. Closer to home. I've been so lucky to observe a similar but deeper phenomenon with two dozen AmeriCorps members whose sense of place really blossomed throughout a year (or more) on our Environmental Education team.

These people were bitten badly by the nature bug and could never go back; they end up doing similar work at the Audubon Society, Franklin Park Conservatory, Stratford Ecological Center, the U.S. Park Service, or even right here at Rural Action as staff members.



Gratitude for one person, especially, was woven into every single one of these powerful moments: Seth Teicher.

Seth was the reason that his family's foundation invested in Rural Action annually. He and his generosity and passion for our work enabled us to build such deep programming over the past 15 years, the results of which are constantly revealing themselves. I just ran into a longtime partner of the EE program, for example, who teared up talking about how much our programming has meant to the kids she has worked with in Perry County. We have been regular faces in schools throughout the region, supporting teachers in facilitating field trips and hands-on lessons rooted in place only because Seth helped make it possible. Hundreds of kids in dozens of summer camps have lined up to jump off our favorite sycamore root perch and into deep creek pools at Wildcat Hollow because of Seth. The relationships they formed with the creeks and forests will serve them in so many ways for the rest of their lives. There may not be a more meaningful gift than this.

For my part, before starting at Rural Action in 2010, I severely doubted there was a job out there for me that would tolerate my idealism and need to be outside so much. His generosity and the position it funded not only proved me wrong, but gave me the precise outlet I needed to share my passion with over 20,000 fellow humans and counting. Seth Teicher gave me the opportunity to find my place in the world, and I will never forget that. We will miss him dearly.



Seth lived with Aphasia for several years and was an advocate for those struggling with similar disorders.

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SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Chesterhill Produce Auction connects customers throughout Ohio and West Virginia with hundreds of growers who sell local produce, livestock, and wood products at wholesale prices.

Zero Waste Event Productions, LLC- founded in 2015 as a waste diversion service provider at music festivals and public events, educates the public about the benefits of landfill diversion, and encourages long-term reuse and recycling practices.

True Pigments, LLC- produces ferric oxide pigment from acid mine drainage to facilitate the restoration of seven miles of Sunday Creek, fostering the rejuvenation of aquatic ecosystems and stimulating job growth and economic development in the region.

UpCycle Ohio Thrift- focuses on providing gently used goods at low cost to our Southeastern Ohio community while reducing the amount of products entering the waste stream.

Community Makerspace- a collaborative social enterprise that aims to foster creativity and build entrepreneurial and educational opportunities through shared-use equipment and spaces.

Appalachian Understories- provides natural and cultural historic tourism in Appalachian Ohio, hiring local guides, historians, and naturalists to create outdoor experiences for people.





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