 West Virginia University
CENTER FOR RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

GROUND- WORK 2020 *Reflections*

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Learning Together

On December 5, 2019 we inaugurated the WVU Center for Resilient Communities in the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences. It was a momentous occasion; closing a chapter on many years of hard work and opening a new chapter. Surrounded by our university and community partners, colleagues, friends and family we embraced one another and committed to build this distinctive institution for West Virginia.

Dean Greg Dunaway marked the event with aspirational words that we continue to hold dear.

“I believe what we are about to start today will be truly transformational, not just for the state of West Virginia but the way we think about higher education in general. The Center for Resilient Communities promises to be a conduit for changing communities and, by extension, individual lives. But it also points to a new direction in how academics think about their work and engage communities more effectively in praxis.” (December 5, 2019)

Speaking to the nature of praxis in engaging communities, a guiding partner Marz Attar of the One Foundation urged us to consider the importance of humility and embodying principles of ground up learning and creative action:

“The world is in crisis. We need one another to vision together, to creatively imagine, to collaboratively strategize and to take action to heal our communities. In order to serve appropriately, we must begin with attention to the ground to understand the root causes of disharmony, hardship and the realities facing our communities.” (December 5, 2019)

Strengthened by these leading words and the posture they demand, the CRC entered 2020 with a unified

spirit and a sense of collective purpose. Little did we know how important this moment would be; a kind of calm before a storm whose winds and tests would leave few in its path untouched.

Within just a few short months we are all suddenly and unexpectedly confronted by an unprecedented pandemic, an economic catastrophe, a reckoning with racial oppression, and a struggle over the future of democracy in the United States.

For those of us who served the CRC in 2020, these trials not only confirmed the need for our fledgling center and gave meaning to our daily work but also tested our resolve in efforts to develop and deliver on promises to our colleagues, students and our partners; to accompany them in service to communities advancing equity, justice and social transformation.

The CRC has needed to adapt our plans, programs and personnel internally to realign our goals with the evolving and uncertain situation on the ground with our current and emerging partners. Through it all, we have been humbled by the limits of our efforts, reinforced by the power of mutual accompaniment with our partners, and carried forward by faith in action that has enabled us to make modest but important gains.

In reflection, it is perhaps appropriate that a center whose moniker includes the word resilience would be forced to engage directly with this range of social problems, disasters and tumult in its first year. Indeed, we would need to learn through experience how to live resiliently, work patiently, to make our distinctive contribution to address the root causes of these injustices and to find ways to work with others to build alternatives.

Contents

2 *Listening*

6 *Accompaniment*

10 *Education*

14 *Engagement*

18 *Development*

22 *Partnerships*

24 *Collaborators*
Special Thanks



Marz and Manijeh Attar
Watch the CRC's opening ceremony

While the events of 2020 may recede into our individual and collective memories, the trauma of this past year will not. This past year, we bore witness to the deep problems we must learn to understand and to solve together. We remain ever vigilant to align our research, action and educational processes with the noble goals of a more just, democratic, ecologically sound, and caring society where all people may live with dignity and where each person is afforded every opportunity to develop the fullness of their potential and to share their gifts.

As we highlight throughout this annual report, the CRC has learned together that our approaches to listening, action research, education, engagement, development and partnership-building are just beginning to bear fruit. We offer our sincere gratitude to our supporters in 2020 and invite each of you to join us in 2021 as we learn together in the path of collaborative action, collective inquiry and social transformation.

In peace and solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bradley R. Wilson'.

Bradley R. Wilson, Ph.D.
Director, WVU Center for Resilient Communities



Listening

All of our work begins from a conversation — the discovery of shared values, shared stories, shared fate, and shared problems. Listening builds trust, and if the spirit feels right, may lead to a process of learning and experimentation with new found partners.

One Foundation Executive Director Katie Loudin shares a personal story in a story circle hosted in the CRC in February 2020 just a few days before Covid-19 caused us to retreat to our homes. Story circles, as an approach to building community and trust, continue to inform our work and even inspired the Listening Project with our partner Our Future WV.



STORIES OF RESILIENCE:

Learning to Listen for a Change

In Spring 2020, Our Future WV was searching for a new and distinctive approach to community organizing, leadership development and policy change-making. “We wanted to reconnect with what animates our work to improve the lives of working people and to turn pain into power,” explained Amy Jo Hutchinson. Amidst a pandemic, economic crisis and racial justice uprisings shaking everyday life across the United States, we embarked together on a Listening Project.

Truly a collaboration, staff from both organizations developed the questions, piloted story gathering and designed a website to share the results. “We said: Let’s just try it out, let’s talk to some people, and see what we find. Perhaps we might create a tool that brings people together and also hear each other’s experiences in a way that makes us vulnerable to one another. What we found was far more powerful than that: we were learning to listen,” explained Valentina Muraleedharan a graduate assistant with the CRC.



Amy Jo Hutchinson
Our Future WV

Watch her story ←

Learn more about
Our Future WV

 **READ ABOUT THE PROJECT**

 **LISTEN TO STORIES HERE**

BY THE NUMBERS:

750

People Engaged
in Conversation

185

Sustained
Conversation

75

Individuals
participating in
collaborative action

15+

Organizational
Allies



“My source of strength is young people’s willpower. They are just facing some of the hardest social dynamics that they could possibly be facing. It is literally life and death. And this is when you truly find out who people are. There could have been a million reasons for young people to shut down and say, nope, we’re not doing anything, I think all across the country and definitely here in West Virginia. Through my work, I’ve been able to experience young people showing that, even at the toughest of times, they’re willing to work to make West Virginia a better place to live. That commitment is unwavering. So, if that doesn’t make me strong, what will?”

TAKEIYA SMITH,

Our Future WV Organizer and Listening Project participant



Accompanime

LISTENING + INQUIRY + EDUCATION + ENGAGEMENT + DEVELOPMENT +

Central to our approach in the Center for Resilient Communities is the practice of accompaniment. Accompaniment seeks the gifts and abilities of each person, recognizes that every individual and community challenge is distinctive, and requires us to make sacrifices and commit to walking new paths of learning and action, together. Accompaniment, as a practice of solidarity, calls on us to learn how to best contribute to the advancement of one another through time.

Nick Achieng and Joshua Lohnes discuss Nourishing Networks Food Access wheels at Marjorie Gardens during outreach meeting about improving food access in Morgantown's largest public housing complex.

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PARTNERSHIPS = ACCOMPANIMENT



Lines of Inquiry and Action

One of the ways we practice accompaniment is through long term participatory action research with individuals, organizations and communities. Our partners, students and staff engage in cycles of action and reflection and cooperative experimentation to make systemic changes in our communities. Our participatory research enables us to read present realities together, build tools for action, shape future discourse and policy, and even construct new institutions.



MAPPING FOOD INSECURITY IN PANDEMIC TIMES

How are West Virginians responding to the problem of food insecurity in 2020? COVID-19

significantly upended the nutrition assistance landscape across the state of West Virginia. Food insecurity rates rose significantly even as new nutrition assistance programs came into being. Many food charities shut down and new mobile sites popped up. School closures significantly affected the delivery of school nutrition programs. With lead support from graduate researchers such as Emily Tingle, the WV FOODLINK team continued to track these changes and work with state offices to collect data to represent them for the public, ensuring that knowledge about food assistance programming continues to be transparent and effective for policymakers, social service actors and others.



EXPANDING FOOD RIGHTS

What policies can improve access to food for the most vulnerable in our communities? The CRC continued action

research to support the Food for All Coalition, a multi-stakeholder network of advocates advancing the right to nutritious food in West Virginia. Dr. Joshua Lohnes, Food Policy Research Director, led

ongoing action research on food security strategies with a coalition of partners including the WV Center for Budget and Policy, WV Food and Farm Coalition, Mountaineer Food Bank, Facing Hunger Food Bank, and American Friends Service Committee. He provided critical consulting to our federal, state, and county level representatives on a variety of issues from federal stimulus to summer feeding, the allocation of CARES act funding and other nutrition assistance related relief in the wake of COVID-19.



MAPPING SAFE WATER

How do we ensure every West Virginian has access to safe tap water? Safe drinking water is essential to human life and community wellbeing.

Tap water can be used for drinking, cooking, bathing, and cleaning. Dr. Nico Zegre and CRC graduate researcher Grace Dever advanced a critical analysis of inequalities in access to safe drinking water across the state of West Virginia. Drawing on the tools of Geographic Information Science, they explored factors such as socioeconomic difference, toxic release inventory, flood risk and safe drinking water violations. They found a strong correlation between communities of color, ethnicity, and vulnerability to slow and/or inadequate enforcement of safe drinking water. In the next stage of the research they will be creating an online mapping tool for communities to explore potential sources of contaminated drinking water and how they can create change.



COMMUNITY KITCHENS

How can we empower small-scale cottage food producers to sell products that are safe and locally grown? Engaging

cottage food producers and processors to improve food safety and grow their business can propel the local food system and strengthen rural economies. Megan Govindan, Community Leadership Director, led action research on nutritional labeling policy support, food safety training, and the development of food entrepreneurship programming with an emerging network of community kitchens, such as Greenville Farm Kitchen in Greenville, WV, ACCESS WV in Wayne, WV, Wardensville Garden Market in Wardensville, WV, and Heart & Hand House in Philippi, WV.



PRESCRIBING PRODUCE

Doctors across the US have adopted Hippocrates' dictum of "let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food" in the care

of their patients. Concern over 'diet-related diseases' such as obesity and high cholesterol have led health practitioners and communities to look towards food as a potential solution to these problems. Graduate researcher Alanna Higgins is currently writing her dissertation "*Food as Medicine?: Produce Prescription Programs and Federal Nutrition Policy in the United States*" which considers both the policy debates and practical elements of this emerging public health intervention in West Virginia and across the country.



WOMEN, FOOD AND CARE

Who is leading the charge to mend our broken food systems? Women in West Virginia are not only growing food, feeding their

families, selling it at the grocery stores, serving it in restaurants and schools, and distributing it in food

pantries, they are organizing for policy change in their own communities and working to combat systemic problems at the root of hunger and malnutrition. Graduate Researcher Heidi Gum defended her M.A. thesis in August 2020 entitled "*Resilience in the Mountains: Exploring the Labor and Motives of Food-Caregivers in West Virginia.*" This work has directly informed the continued development and revision of the CRC's Nourishing Networks curriculum.



RETHINKING RURAL GROCERY

How do we guarantee our grocery stores do not disappear? In 2020, the CRC collaborated with the WV Food and Farm Coalition, Grow Ohio

Valley, Rural Route 219 and Blue Ridge Bee Company to conduct extensive research on alternative community-centered grocers across the country. In action research led by Outreach Director Amanda Marple, our team found a deepening problem of locally-owned grocery closures throughout the state and explored models of community ownership that might serve grassroots efforts in the present and the future.



COOPERATIVE FOOD HUBS

How can farmers, businesses and consumers cooperate to improve equity in regional food systems? Food hubs are central to the

aggregation and distribution of local produce to regional customers and securing farmer viability. Dr. Bradley Wilson, Executive Director of the CRC, and graduate researcher Valerie Slone have been exploring models of agricultural cooperation around the world for the production and marketing of produce by small-scale farmers. These approaches to food hub development from Nicaragua and Spain to Kenya and India are now informing the strategic design of Turnrow Appalachian Farm Collective as a cooperative enterprise capable of improving farm income and expanding access to fresh affordable and local food in WV.



Education

Shared learning is at the core of our work together with students, community leaders, and organizations. As a natural outgrowth of long term action research and collaboration with communities, our education programs seek to cultivate the capacities of individuals to tackle our most pressing problems and serve their communities with compassion.



Students from the 2019 Appalachian Food Justice Institute participate in a team building exercise at the West Virginia University Outdoor Education Center



Due to COVID-19 the 2020 session of the CRC Summer Appalachian Food Justice Institute was held virtually.

“Although social distancing measures kept us physically apart through most of 2020, the CRC deepened our connections with students and community leaders through virtual meetings, study circles and institute courses. COVID-19 did not slow us down, it forced us to innovate in ways that will transform our educational programs for years to come.”

Amanda Marple, *Director of Education and Outreach*

SPRING INSTITUTE: RESEARCH FOR SOCIAL ACTION

In January 2020, the CRC launched the Community Leadership and Social Action course with a cohort of six exemplary student leaders selected from across Eberly College. This semester-long course introduced students to action research and prepared them for an impactful internship in collaboration with our partners. Students paired with policy advocates across the state in support of research on affordable housing, child care, food security, education reform, community arts and downtown revitalization.



READ STUDENT
EXPERIENCES

SUMMER INSTITUTE: APPALACHIAN FOOD JUSTICE

In June 2020, the CRC hosted the second annual Summer Institute for Appalachian Food Justice to empower student leaders to be agents of change within the food system. Fifteen students joined the Appalachian Food Justice Institute for a three week online course. Given the continued success of the virtual learning approach we aim to host our Appalachian Food Justice course during the Spring and Summer 2021. Read a **reflection from one of our students**.

FALL INSTITUTE: COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY & PLANNING

In September 2020, the CRC hosted a course in community food planning for community leaders and health educators in collaboration with WVU Extension Family Nutrition Program. An outgrowth of our Nourishing Networks workshop program which has engaged over 400 participants across WV in food system change, the course trains participants to be facilitators of the Nourishing Networks planning approach. Thirty-five health educators enrolled in the program and graduates will launch their own community food planning processes in Spring 2021.

BY THE NUMBERS:

10
Graduate
Fellows

60+
Undergraduate
Students

80+
Community
Leaders

630
Hours of
Instruction



“Being a Graduate Fellow at the Center for Resilient Communities has offered me a unique opportunity to engage with leaders, organizations, and groups in West Virginia. I have even developed close friendships with inspiring organizers across the state who are shaping my scholarship. Though the COVID-19 pandemic inevitably affected the day-to-day work of the Center, I have grown closer to my colleagues and our partners through these adversities, finding support and joy in what we’re striving to accomplish together.”

VALENTINA MURALEEDHARAN,
graduate student, CRC Graduate Fellow

“Through the CRC I was able to translate what I was learning in the classroom into real opportunities for community change. My engagement with the CRC has helped me to hone my writing and communication skills, but the most impactful experience has been my work with CRC partner the RiffRaff Arts Collective out of Princeton, WV. Working with them to build their organization’s capacity and fuel downtown development and creative placemaking has been not only the most incredible student experience with the CRC, but of all of my time at WVU.”

MARTHA BALL, *undergraduate student, Geography Engagement Internship Program* ←





Engagement

Last summer, as the protest that coalesced around the death of George Floyd rocked the country, the CRC looked to engage with our partners and community on a local, regional and national level, about the origins of racism and its impact on everyday aspects of our society. Through study circles, food justice workshops and conversations with leading activists and community leaders we created space for community in a time when what it means to be in community has changed forever.



Last summer, West Virginia House Delegate Danielle Walker fired up a crowd protesting the death of George Floyd during a Movement for Black Lives protest in Morgantown, WV.

RACE AND FOOD STUDY CIRCLE

In an initiative to elevate discussions and reflections on the effects of racism and structural inequalities in our food system this Fall (and beyond), the Center for Resilient Communities facilitated a 6 week long conversation on the intersection between race and food using the book, “Black Food Geographies: Race, Self Reliance, and Food Access in Washington, D.C.” by Dr. Ashantee Reese. This reading group focused on intersection of race and food, brought together over 40 registered participants from West Virginia, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and Maryland. During the weekly call participants advanced their understanding of the complexities and nuances related to food access, race, place, and resilience.



READ PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES

ENGAGING FEDERAL NUTRITION POLICY-MAKERS

In July the CRC presented the 4 years of findings from the **Nourishing Networks** program - a ground up community healthy food access planning approach - to a high profile national audience of USDA program officers through the office of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) - Local Food Systems Advisory Council. There were more than 50 USDA officers on the call including the regional director. Building on this momentum the CRC held a community food security and planning popular education course for health educators across West Virginia building on the Nourishing Networks and Appalachian Food Justice Institute curricula. The CRC is currently formalizing this training into an online curriculum for **SNAP-Ed Connection**.

THE GLOBAL SOLIDARITY ALLIANCE FOR FOOD HEALTH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The CRC engaged with a transatlantic group of anti-hunger and food system practitioners, activists, and scholars **concerned about the rise and normalization of food charity** in the wake of COVID-19. CRC led the drafting and circulation of an **open letter to the philanthropic community** signed by over 100 stakeholders urging funders to go beyond charity and invest in transformational food system change. We presented the letter to members of the Sustainable Agriculture and Food System Funders Network in a webinar titled **“We Can’t Foodbank our way out of Hunger”**. The Alliance is currently developing a podcast series and working on a counter-map to the Global Food Banking Network “food donation atlas”, to counter the false notion that food banking can be a long-term solution to food waste and hunger, and advance innovative ideas that link existing food bank and anti-hunger networks to the food sovereignty movement. The proposal will be circulated with groups working to advance the right to food (including the U.N. Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food) for funding opportunities.

CO-SPONSORING THE RACIAL JUSTICE RESEARCH INITIATIVE

In Summer 2020 the CRC co-sponsored an initiative led by the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences to fund research projects related to racial justice and to the historical, economic, educational, social, scientific, structural and transnational implications of race, racism and anti-blackness. The CRC helped fund two important projects through a new racial justice grant. The first project will result in a new book of poetry and the second explores racial disparities in vaccination rates.



Last February, **Dina Hornbaker**, FIRSTHAND Coffee co-founder and WVU Geography alumnus, performed at one of the WVU Center for Resilient Communities speaker series events, which featured musical performances, presentations with leading activist and story circles. The series also included a presentation by Molly Hemstreet and Bob Carswell from the **Industrial Commons** on worker-owned cooperative movement and Jenna Nicholas, CEO of **Impact Experience**, spoke on building bridges between impact investors, philanthropists, innovators and leaders of marginalized communities — linking vision with action and directing investment to the most vulnerable communities.

▶ **Jessica Walden, MS, RD, LD**
Nourishing Networks participant
Nutrition Educator - Cabell County
Marshall University, Nutrition Education Program

“The awareness the Nourishing Networks program provided is key. I have been made aware of the bigger issues in the food system and now want to find ways to be a part of the solution. I really hope to become a part of the movement to create change.”





Development

Development is a growth process which enables people and societies to realize their full potential. Our research, education and engagement efforts are intimately tied to the goal of social and economic development or what we call community wealth building. Ground up community wealth building takes long term commitment to work alongside people who are creating new pathways, capacities and economic futures.



Josh Evans, Sprouting Farms Production Manager, harvests basil at their training farm located in Talcott, WV. Sprouting Farms Corp works to support the development of sustainable farm businesses and a more equitable food system in Central Appalachia, offering small farm business education, training, land access, and market development.

GROWING CAPACITY

This Spring, the CRC helped design and propose the Growing Capacity project with our partners Sprouting Farms which received \$1.5 million from the Appalachian Regional Commission. Growing Capacity brings together a group of 8 partners in West Virginia and Virginia to establish an integrated regional food system workforce development ecosystem. These partners include Sprouting Farms (lead), Fruits of Labor, KISRA, Five Rivers Cooperative, Refresh Appalachia, New Roots Community Farm, Appalachian Sustainable Harvest, and High Rocks. The CRC is accompanying these partners to establish a network of agri-development centers in West Virginia and southwest Virginia to train agricultural and culinary workers, including individuals in recovery or who were previously incarcerated.

TURNROW, APPALACHIAN FARM COLLECTIVE

In 2020, the CRC has been working side by side with Turnrow to build a cooperatively organized and financially sustainable regional food hub in West Virginia. Collecting data and analyzing systems has taken the better part of the year, but our “on the ground” approach allowed the team to design a sustainable path forward. This growth strategy resulted in an investable business plan and an operational strategy. The plan will be used to raise the necessary capital for Turnrow to be sustainable in the long term. To establish a foundation for 2021, the CRC also helped write two USDA grants, totaling nearly \$1.2 million. Both grants are funding capacity- building to establish Turnrow as a cooperative enterprise. Current projects are integrating multiple organizations, including Appalachian Sustainable Development, New Roots Community Farm, Garret Growers Cooperative, Lewis County Farmers Market, Sprouting Farms, Grow Ohio Valley, and the Williamson Health and Wellness Center.








 [READ ABOUT
TURNROW](#)



“Turnrow is building a real, practical business model that creates a more resilient food system for small Appalachia farmers. We are working with the Turnrow team to bring together diverse group of stakeholders and to grow market sectors; resulting in greater profitability for our farmers in the Mountain State.”

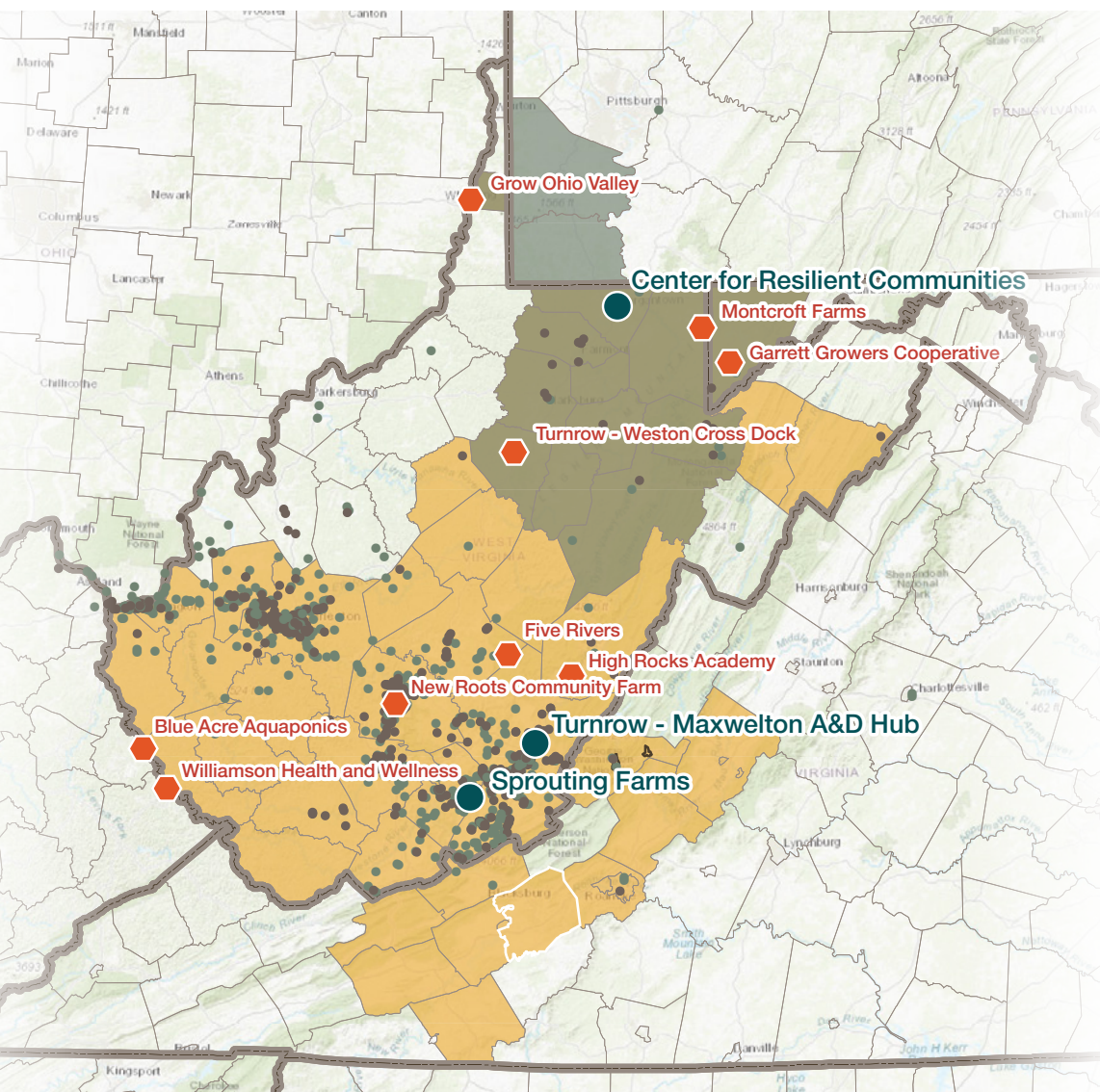
FRITZ BOETTNER,

CRC Food Systems Development Director

- 
-  Supported Entities 2020-21
 -  Core Project Team Sites
 -  Turnrow New Customers, 2020 (646)
 -  Turnrow Existing Customers (891)
 -  Turnrow New/Improved Service Areas, 2020
 -  Turnrow Operating Area

BY THE NUMBERS:

2019	93	891	\$368,213	\$294,570
2020	133	1,537	\$693,411	\$554,729
	Growers	Customers	Revenue	Farmer Impact



April Koenig
Executive Director,
Sprouting Farms

“I cannot stress enough how much I appreciate the partnership we have with the CRC. This is difficult work. Having the CRC team walking with our Sprouting Farms family through the action research process and to develop an equitable food system is absolutely invaluable.”

Turnrow expands the local food distribution system across the region of Central Appalachia. They have doubled local produce sales this year returning over half a million dollars to small scale growers.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to our work with communities across West Virginia, Appalachia, and around the world. The Center for Resilient Communities forms deep and lasting relationships with our partners on the basis of shared values and a long-term commitment to social transformation.

2020 FOUNDATIONAL PARTNERS

The One Foundation
Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation

2020 ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS

Our Future WV
Riff-Raff Arts Collective
Sprouting Farms
Mother Jones Community Foundation
Resolve Financial Services Co-op
WVU Extension Family Nutrition

2020 PROJECT PARTNERS

West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition
WV Center for Budget and Policy
Appalachian Sustainable Development
Refresh Appalachia

Grow Ohio Valley
Keys for Healthy Kids
Resiliency Railroad
American Friends Service Committee
Kanawha Institute for Social Research and Action
Fruits of Labor
Mountaineer Food Bank
Facing Hunger Food Bank
Fayette County Commission
New Roots Farm
Mingo County Redevelopment Authority
Downstream Strategies
Creative Disruptors
Conscious Harvest Cooperative
Mountain Harvest Farm
Shack Neighborhood House
84 Agency

IMPACT

CRC collaborations with organizational and project partners resulted in:



\$7,217,438

in Federal Government Support for West Virginia in 2020



\$893,000

in Private Foundation Support for West Virginia in 2020



RIFF-RAFF ARTS COLLECTIVE

“The entire CRC team has been wonderful! I have felt steadfast support, genuine depth of appreciation and understanding of our work, and concern for our well-being. The level of intelligence and capability of this team is astounding and, honestly, I sometimes have to pinch myself to believe I have this incredible opportunity before me as a partner to the CRC.”

LORI MCKINNEY is the Executive Director of the Riff Raff Arts Collective in Princeton, West Virginia.



RESOLVE FINANCIAL SERVICES CO-OP

“The CRC saw value in the work we were doing when it seemed as if no one was paying attention. Not only did the CRC offer full throated support of the work we’ve been doing, they rolled their sleeves up and jumped down in the trenches with us. A true ally. A true partner.”

MAVERY DAVIS is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), co-founder of Resolve Financial Services Co-op, and founder of the Financial Literacy Bootcamp in Charleston, West Virginia.



MOTHER JONES COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

“I am honored to work with the CRC. Finally, there is education available for community sustainability. I’m excited. I look forward to working with CRC in designing models of secure food systems. Our mountains are full of food. This is why people settled this land. What we don’t gather we grow. By creating spaces to teach and learn this culture we will change the face of hunger from the ground up, literally. It gives me hope.”

MARIA GUNNOE is a grassroots leader, environmental justice advocate and Executive Director of the Mother Jones Community Foundation in Boone County, West Virginia.



RESILIENCY RAILROAD

“Just as milk is purposed to *nourish* a baby, and as the rays from the sun *sustain* the elements of a garden, so has the CRC assisted in *cultivating* my grassroots efforts. Just as a parent/guardian becomes the *escort* of their child’s childhood event, and as we all *attend* to what holds our passion, so has the CRC *accompanied* me in developing ideas and actions of liberation.”

DR. SHANEQUA SMITH, Ph.D. is a grassroots leader who developed the Resiliency Railroad, a youth empowerment program designed to nurture the potential of youth of color from disadvantaged backgrounds in WV.

Collaborators



FRITZ BOETTNER
*Program Director,
Food System Development*

Fritz has 20 years of experience in planning and execution of organizational development

processes in Appalachia focused on environmental conservation, food systems change and community-based enterprises. In 2020 Fritz stepped down from his founding leadership role at Sprouting Farms, continued to lead the advancement of the non-profit food hub the Turnrow Appalachian Farm Collective, and raised over \$3,000,000 in federal funds for food system development in the Growing Capacity project in collaboration with partners such as Appalachian Sustainable Development, KISRA, Fruits of Labor, Refresh Appalachian, New Roots Farm and Blue Acre Aquaponics.



MEGAN GOVINDAN
*Program Director,
Community Leadership*

Megan is a Service Instructor and Registered Dietitian who uses action research to examine

community food systems, public health, and community geography. In 2020, Megan led the CRC sponsored multi-sectoral Take Back Our Health initiative, the multi-stakeholder Community Kitchens project and developed a range of undergraduate leadership opportunities including the Geo-Engagement Internship Initiative with 21 students and 10 community organizations. Building on two years of work, Megan recently secured \$500,000 in federal funds to support agriculture workforce training and build a cooperative of community kitchens and strengthen food entrepreneurialism across WV.



JOSHUA LOHNES
*Program Director,
Food Policy Research*

Joshua holds a Ph.D in Geography and conducts action research on the moral, political and economic place

of food in the wider economy. In 2020, Josh led the Food Justice Lab, the CRC's longest standing cooperative experiment, and provided pivotal leadership to the WV Food for All Coalition which worked to address issues of hunger and food system change in WV. Josh also deepened his participation in the Global Solidarity Alliance for Food, Health, and Social Justice which is advancing a rights-based framework for change.



AMANDA MARPLE
*Program Director,
Education and Outreach*

Amanda has five years of experience as a cooperative development specialist and youth leadership

educator. Amanda leads our youth empowerment work and outreach to partners in the CRC. In 2020, Amanda led our Appalachian Food Justice Institute, the Rural Grocery Project, Geo-Engagement Internship Initiative, and built and sustained our new partnerships with Our Future WV, Sprouting Farms, Riff Raff Arts Collective, Resolve Financial Co-op, Resiliency Railroad and the Mother Jones Community Foundation.



RAYMOND THOMPSON JR

*Program Director,
Community Storytelling*

Raymond is a visual artist who has worked in community journalism and publishing for over a decade

and is passionate about storytelling on the local level. Raymond oversees all internal and external communications of the CRC. In 2020, Raymond helped lead the development of the Listening Project: Stories of Resilience in West Virginia and contributed his own visual art project Appalachian Ghosts which focuses on the death of black miners from the Hawks Nest disaster and raises the question of how we reckon with systemic erasures when racial prejudice shapes who counts in archived histories in our communities.



BRADLEY WILSON

Executive Director

Bradley holds a Ph.D. in Geography and is the founding director of the CRC. He is passionate about advancing people-centered action

research methodologies as a means of addressing social, economic and environmental injustices and building alternatives. In 2020, Bradley worked closely with the One Foundation, the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Geology and Geography, and our partners Our Future WV, Sprouting Farms, Turnrow Appalachian Farm Collective, Riff Raff Arts Collective, Mother Jones Community Foundation, Resolve Financial Co-op, Resiliency Railroad, to develop place-based strategies for ground up empowerment.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

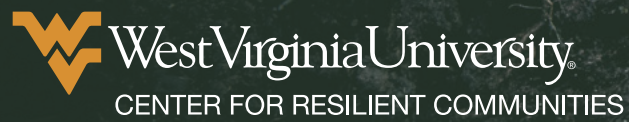


**CLAUDE
WORTHINGTON
BENEDUM
FOUNDATION**




Department of Geology and Geography





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