

Volume 49, Issue 1, Spring 2026

GRADUATE HUMANITIES

A multidisciplinary program bringing together students and faculty from a variety of backgrounds to collaboratively explore the interdisciplinary intersections of the arts, historical, cultural, and literary studies within an open, exploratory, and experimental graduate-level educational environment.

Everyone has a story

Eight students in the Spring 2025 "Nonprofits in Appalachia" Seminar conducted collaborative interviews with leaders in regional nonprofits. Three interviews appeared in the Fall 2025 Graduate Humanities. And this issue follows with the remaining five interviews.

Our experience taught us that because we encourage close listening by the interviewer, the interviews tend to morph into conversations of purpose, meaning, and discovery.

This outcome is not readily anticipated when the interview is first initiated. And some of the biggest learnings come during the behind-the-scenes transcribing from recording to text, and then from the quietest of actions, the rewriting, multiple rounds of editing, and follow-up conversations with the interviewees. Sometimes it's the editor that benefits the most.

~ Trish Hatfield, Editor

4. Mixing the Arts With the Pleasure of Running and Walking

A Interview with Alexis Batausa, by Heather Lauer

Alexis Batausa, resident of Williamson, West Virginia, holds volunteer leadership positions in three nonprofits—President and Race Director of the Tug Valley Road Runners Club, board member of the HeArt of West Virginia, and Chairman of the Mingo County Health Department. Heather Lauer, student (at the time) of the Marshall University Graduate Humanities Program, interviewed him on April 18, 2025.

< Heather Lauer: Alexis is a friendly guy, always smiling and laughing. We've been friends for years and have worked together on community projects. He's a distance endurance runner in Williamson and teaches Yoga for The HeArt of West Virginia. He also volunteers with other local events and disasters like last year's flood. "I pretty much tell everyone I am everywhere. LOL." He's received awards honoring his leadership and humanitarian



Alexis Batausa

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nature. Alexis is also Director of the Active Living at Williamson Health and Wellness Center, which helps increase physical activity in the region.

I began our interview by asking Alexis, "What nonprofits are you associated with? And when and why did you get involved with them?"

Alexis Batausa: I'll start off with the Tug Valley Road Runners Club (where I'm now the President and race director.) (See <https://www.facebook.com/TugValleyRoadRunnersClub/>.) I believe it was in the 2010s that I was getting more health-conscious with my family going through a lot of the complications related to diabetes.

And I remember meeting Dave Hatfield, who was the president and race director at the time and I started tagging along with him—just to be involved with volunteering and understanding how everything worked, from how the race is being timed, volunteer opportunities, you name it . . . It's just like any other thing. But of course, it's unique within its own thing, with running and walking.

And then working with Jim Pajarillo, Founder of HeArt of West Virginia, which is dedicated to using arts and health to improve the quality of life of West Virginia residents. (See <https://www.facebook.com/HeArtOfWV/>.)

Even before 2020, Jim and I were discussing other things we wanted to see here in our community: events related to the arts and working with other organizations. All of us pretty much, you know, wear many, many hats with all the different organizations we work with. (Chuckle) So yeah, I could go more in-depth with each one of them, but I guess it's like something short and sweet right here. (Laughter)

I protested loudly, "Oh, go more into depth! Let's start with Road Runners."



Hatfield McCoy Marathon Start at Food City, South Williamson, Kentucky

So when it comes to community work, The Tug Valley Road Runners Club has been really key since 2000. The first thing they created was the Hatfield McCoy Marathon, which is pretty much our biggest event. The entire region here, in the last 26 years, brings in runners from all around the country and pretty much the world. We've seen the marathon grow from like 35 people to the point where we were breaking records with 1100 to 1200 people back in the 2010s due to the excitement built up by the TV movie series, *Hatfields & McCoy's*, that Kevin Costner came out with. You know, it was pretty cool to see something like that grow the race, and seeing that many people come to our small town here in Williamson, which of course used to be a big blustering coal town back in the day.

I really got into race directing and understanding how things work with the monthly races that started in July of 2012. The race director, Dave, got ahold of me and we worked together to honor my mom after she passed away in June. Those first two or three months the races were free for everyone. Eventually we had to put a fee into it and people, you know, really want to be more involved and be accountable for their . . . for



Tug Valley Road Runners Club

A running community to help motivate and inspire everyone to be active and to stay healthy in their daily lives. Never feel discouraged. We all have a story to tell that makes us strong. All are Welcome!



Chatting about how things have changed as they wait to high-five runners completing the Hatfield McCoy Marathon



Official logo Hatfield McCoy Marathon

themselves, running and walking and seeing themselves train for goals each month. We were doing really well averaging 130 people per month and, race-wise, doing more than 20 races per year.

I became president of the Tug Valley Road Runners in the fall of 2015. We've cut back and stuck to the ones that always draw attention. The "Coal Dust Run" used to be really big. Of course it celebrated the heritage of coal here in our region.

We used to have about 405 people for that event, which was insane in September. And then you have your theme races around the holidays and then we kind of graduated into more involvement with the Ultra marathons (longer than the usual 26-mile marathons) . . . I initiated our first ultra in 2018 with the "Conquer The Wall," which is now held every March. I had the idea of it after I did my first Ultra in Georgia, where they directed the *Walking Dead* and filmed a lot of country roads.

I chuckled again when I heard that Alexis was inspired by a another movie to design another race. Alexis got the idea for a loop course and with friends gathered information on how to find the right course for an Ultra that could work around Williamson. Eventually they figured out a 2-mile loop that was a 35-hour race at the flood wall in West Williamson. The number of runners grew from 30 people the first year in 2018 to something like 60 people in 2020.

Of course, 2020 was the COVID year. But nobody really caught COVID at our race, so we were really, really

lucky. And since then . . . just seeing that Ultra race grow so much that we've been averaging over 100 something participants now in the last two or three years. You know this past year was a tough one, too, because of the flooding in our region. The flood wall pretty much did its job. It protected our cities, our areas. And the course got pretty much flooded out there. One of our dilemmas was to try to get things ready 'cause we were all swamped and exhausted doing the flood relief and then having to transition back to the race itself.

Alexis continued talking about some races with their distinctive names suggested by locations or causes: "Darn you COVID," "Cause for Paws," "Slicker than Snot," a trail run called "Race to Death Rock," and an ultra called "Coalfields Backyard Ultra."

It's pretty cool to see this stuff. There's so many opportunities, like organizing, working with volunteers, working with your federal community members and local fire departments, . . . marketing (flyers, social media, posters, word of mouth), awards. All the little pieces, you can name it. It's a lot! (Laughter)

When it comes to nonprofits, it's really there for you to put in the work. I mean, you raise the money, but a lot of money goes back towards our communities. There's always a big fundraiser for Belfry High School Soccer Teams for Boys and Girls during the Marathon. We help them out with their pasta dinner. We give out money to our fire departments, our police (those who are involved), the volunteers like best water stops just

because we have to. You know we want to. And that's what's always rewarding. And then, within ourselves, is a *self*, helping the community get moving and active and finding the right people who have the right mindset and shared values.

The other nonprofit I'm involved in is an arts organization, The HeArt of West Virginia, and I'm a board member.

Lots to talk about here—a lot of the music, like Jim Pajarillo, with Open Mic Nights, Willcon (Williamson's Popular Culture Festival), the Whims and Events community, the Convention & Visitor's Bureau

So like I said, there's all these different funnels and stuff like that, that work together with everyone and then of course the creation of the Y'allternative Art Space was a huge thing.

Working with the Tamarack Foundation with Jim and opening up to the community a space with different local artists

It was like this past week or the last two weeks. I teach Gentle yoga. The mall had the room I usually occupy, so Jim got us into the community art space . . . we're like, ooh and aweing for the first 20 minutes before the class started. (Laughter) Which I didn't care 'cause that's what my goal was just to get people to enjoy the art . . .

It was also really fantastic when we had that "Create Your Art" with everyone, kids, adults, everybody of all ages just having fun. Almost 40-50 people in there doing amazing things. We definitely should be bringing that back again 'cause it was great.

And of course, other ideas that we've been hearing from everyone The one Jim Pajarillo keeps pushing is "Damn it, let's just do the movie night thing because we don't even have a movie theater here."



Open Mic Nights 10 years strong.



Opening night of the Y'allternative Art Space for local artists.



Free events for all ages of those interested in the arts, music, and collaboration.



Cosplayer & Jim Pajarillo at WillCon.

OK, Alexis, if you could make three wishes to increase collaboration between organizations, what would they be and how would you know they worked?

How would you know if they worked? (Big sigh) Three wishes? Alexis looks down. Hm . . . (Laughter) Let me think here . . . We've talked about this before . . .

A big event like a 5K during the WillCon Convention—Road Runners and HeArt of West Virginia together. When there's a draw for both events at the same time. I know we both can bring groups into the area and having these different opportunities when it comes to the arts *and* the pleasure of the running and the walking . . . It'd be kind of cool to have kids or even adults create their own version of the Hatfield McCoy Marathon. To see them draw, paint, or color an image of a Devil Anse or Randall McCoy in celebration of the heritage here.

The third wish . . . Probably . . . I guess the third wish is to have all our nonprofits working together and meet other people as passionate as us. I think we've done some of that already but to see them all come together would be fantastic. To see what we all have in common. And I think that's the truth, it really is.



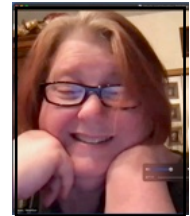
Wow. Thank you very much.

Oh, you're very welcome. Thank you. I am definitely honored to be included in your newsletter. I believe people will understand and visualize the ongoing efforts down here in the Coalfields. We are all trying our best to make these places feel like home and welcoming everyone.>

Afterward

Alexis is a joyful spirit, always giving, and rarely expecting anything back. He is so positive and humble regarding his experience, talking up his upbringing and all the people who do these things with him. I know he does lots more in the community, but we just didn't have time or the space to get to it all! - Heather

Heather Lauer is a Research and Instruction Librarian for Marshall University on the Huntington Campus and is working there on an MA in Sociology. She graduated from the Marshall University Graduate Humanities Program in 2025 and recently presented her humanities creative project, "Appalachian Pop Culture Fairs" at the West Virginia Library Association's Fall Conference.



< Back to running. So, Conquer the Wall. You guys did that this year?

Yep, we did.

How did you do that, considering there was a flood?

Two weeks before the race a crew was pushing the mud to the side and the city clerk, Selena and the Mayor started working with them to help us, because this is the second biggest event of our organization. So much anxiety. But we have to do this race, because if we don't do it. (Sigh) And take a year off. That is just . . . it's going to kill us. It's just like with the marathon this year coming up on June 14. It's gonna be a challenge because our infamous swinging bridge was knocked out by the floods, probably a tree.. We looked at the course there at the bridge, . . . like how the hell we're going to do this? You cannot cross a railroad crossing and then if they get stuck by a train . . . and so, . . . two days ago I thought. "What can we do to cut the course to make this right?" I have a few possibilities for—one of which makes the course too long, but it works 'cause our course is always long. Right?

So it gave me hope. We have just under 60 days, which is crazy. But I think this could work . . . Again, it's just building the relationships with different people. who may not have the same mindset, but who want things to go well in the communities. This is what's key.>

5. A Beacon of Hope for Families Affected by Substance Use and Addiction

An Interview with Jennifer Chapman, by Lisa Hamm

Jennifer Chapman, Director of Development at [Lily's Place](#), was interviewed by Lisa Hamm, Graduate Student in the Marshall University Humanities Program. This in-person interview was conducted in Huntington, West Virginia, on April 14, 2025, 9:45am-10:30am.



Jennifer Chapman

< On April 14, 2025, I had the privilege of sitting down with Jennifer Chapman, Director of Development at Lily's Place in Huntington, West Virginia. As we spoke, it was clear that her passion for helping families affected by substance use and addiction runs deep. The warmth in her voice and the light in her eyes conveyed her unwavering commitment to the mission of Lily's Place – a beacon of hope for those in need.

Lisa Hamm: Tell me a little about yourself and your work.

Jennifer Chapman: I've been the Director of Development here at Lily's Place for the past four years. My main responsibilities include finding and writing grants and securing local financial support. I also focus on social media to help spread the word about Lily's Place and engage with the public through fundraising and events.

Can you tell me a story about a time when collaboration between nonprofits exceeded your expectations?

We had a big event a couple of years called 'Spooktacular.' It was for a community in Fairfield East in Huntington. I think their community center had been out of commission for a few years, maybe being used by another non-profit, but not for children. We saw that it was available. The City of Huntington owned it, so we collaborated with them to do our first 'Spooktacular.'

It was a trick-or-treating Halloween event for kids in the community. The city helped with flyers, and a lot of volunteers from probably thirty community organizations did a trunk-or-treat kind of thing but with tables set in the gym. They could share their information if they wanted or just pass out candy.

Being the first time, we didn't know how it was going



to go. It was a little bit rainy that night so who knows who you're going to get. . . . But we had at least 300 kids. It was crazy. It was a good night.

Just seeing all these cute kids, dressed as princesses and whatever. One of the groups collaborated to supply costumes for kids that didn't have any, so they could go there first if they came in without one. One organization dressed up as princesses so that the kids could get their pictures taken with them.

It was fantastic. It was one of my most favorite events that we've ever done.



What was your contribution to this memorable experience?

I wouldn't say me personally, but as Lily's Place, we came up with the idea and rolled with it. Our

organization has a good name in the community, and people care about what we do. Seeing that we were behind it helped, then other people jumped on board. I mean, who doesn't like kids? Everybody was on board.

Here, everyone has jobs to do. But everyone has to come together to fill in whatever gaps are there. So when it comes to events—there were two of us in the Development Department. And obviously it is more than a two-person job. So we had everybody help pass out the fliers, help decorate, all that. So we decorated for like a week—a lot of really good teamwork.

What visions and strategies were in place organizationally to support these peak experiences?

Our vision at Lily's Place is to see an end to generational substance use. Our typical phrase is, 'Create healthier families and help end the cycle of addiction.'

Prevention is a way to do that. We want to connect with kids in the community to equip them with healthy ways to deal with issues and problems. Our hope is they won't start that initial substance use, and they'll be able to find healthier ways to deal with stuff.

Typically, if people think of Lily's Place, they think of babies. We have four locations right now and only one of them is the babies. We also serve kids, families, and individuals. We have a residential center that serves the moms and their babies and lets them stay together while mom is getting treatment. So, it's a lot. We want people to know about it—in case they could use it.

That's so cool. I wanted to volunteer at Lily's Place, but then I was like 'I'm going to get too attached.'

That's what everyone says. (Laughter)

In what ways does your Board of Directors support your collaborative efforts?

The Board is very supportive. They pretty much support anything that is going to be good for the community. They actively encourage collaboration and offer their own resources. For example, one board member belongs to a local church and they just did a breakfast for the moms in our residential program. It was really sweet. It was really beautiful. They really treated them well. I think they all have a heart for what we're doing and are very involved—we're grateful for that.

Does collaboration align with your core goals?

Yeah, we want more people to be involved and help. Just helping end the cycle of addiction through prevention and through serving those already struggling with addiction, trying to get at it from all angles.

What do you see happening in the nonprofit world?

I do think collaboration is kind of one of the keywords lately. Even in grants, they want to know who you're working with so that people aren't just doing it on their own.

But it's kind of hard to make it all work. It makes you think more outside the box. Like, 'how could we collaborate with somebody on this project?' With our residential center, you have to really think it through. Like, what else would we need for our moms? For our first year, which we're still in, moms on medication-assisted treatment were not provided with special care. So we needed to rely on another organization to make sure they had what they needed.

And there's another organization that comes in that makes sure they get some kind of life skills, like finances, and things like that. We'll think, 'our moms need clothes, so we should probably have this clothing closet.' But there are also places in the community that do that. So it's good if we can point them to collaborating, instead of

trying to take it on ourselves.

Did you find any organizations or individuals that were more compatible with your mission for collaboration?

There are some. Right now, we're covering from basically babies to adults in some way. We have a birth-to-three follow-up clinic at our Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) center. When babies graduate Lily's Place, they'll come back (if moms and dads and caregivers bring them back) in a month just to have a physician and a birth-to-three specialist do a once over on the kid to make sure they're hitting their developmental milestones. If not, we can refer them to services in the community they may be able to use. It helps them catch things early.

What change of perspectives have you seen come from collaboration and working with others in your community?

Not to keep talking about the same thing, but Marcum Terrace, for example—that's something as a kid I was always like, 'that's scary—people die there.' And then you realize like they're not scary, they're just our neighbors. (Laughter)

Our vision at Lily's Place is to see an end to generational substance use. Our typical phrase is, "Create healthier families and help end the cycle of addiction."

There can be bad things happening anywhere, but they are a community that might be able to use a little extra help. So that changed our perspective on that a little bit.

How do you see the aspects of your nonprofit expanding from the local level to the region, regional, national, global levels within the nonprofit sector? What do you see happening or changing?

We have been branching out. It started in started in 2014 with the nation's first Neonatal Abstinence Center. And then and in 2020, we added our Family Center and that led to our Children's Center in 2023.

It was all organic—their parents could use some help because a healthy baby needs a healthy family to continue growing and doing well. And so we wanted to give the parents as much support as we could through counseling, peer support, and case management. That's how the Family Center started.

Then we opened the center to our community and not just the families. Then we realized the kids could use a place of their own—a special place where kids can feel peaceful as they're waiting.

And in 2024, we started our Residential Center, which came very organically as well. We had a mom we were really proud of and thought she was doing so well, and the baby was doing well. Then it turned out, the judge said, 'I don't think that you're ready to be on your own with the baby, so you need a supervised situation.' And she didn't have family here. And to go back to her home, where she was, was going to put her in that same situation she was in with a much higher likelihood that she would use again. We were able to let her stay, and we were her support system. It was unusual, but she was able to keep her baby. We're really proud of that and happy for her.

But it clued us in to the need for more services. She couldn't get into another facility locally, because she hadn't used recently enough. She wasn't clean enough for the judge to be happy with it, but she wasn't in an active addiction where the other organization could keep her.

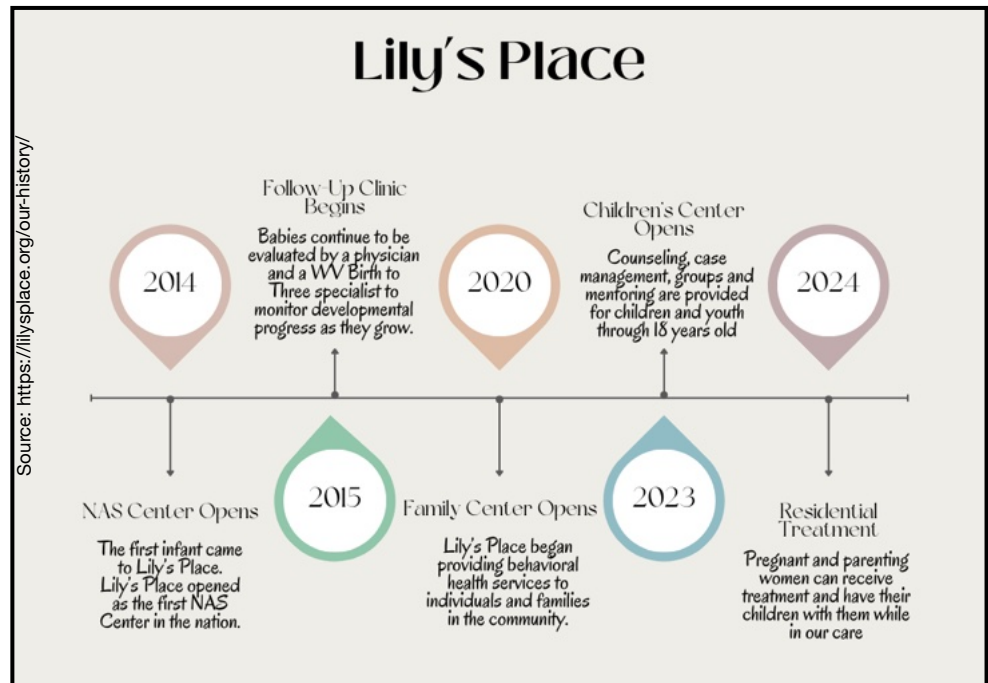
It was a pickle, and we wanted to be able to provide that service. And that's how we started our Residential Treatment Center—because of needs like that. We

wanted to be more open and not restrained by, 'is this going to be paid for?'

How do you identify potential collaborators?

We ask around and do research to find out who does what in the community.

What aspects contribute to successful partnerships?



Staying focused on the need—then we can't really go wrong.

How do you ensure a transparent and open relationship with collaborators?

Make it a priority. It hasn't been an issue, but I see where it could be. Being direct is important. If something feels off, it's best to discuss it openly.

Do collaborations impact your ability to secure funding or resources?

Yes, they can impact it both positively and negatively. Some grants require collaboration, while others create competition for the same funding.

Are there any future collaborations you hope to explore?

Yes, we're looking forward to the Community Resource Center we're developing, which will require collaboration with various groups.

If you could make three wishes to further collaboration between organizations. What would they be? And how would you know that they worked?

You need to have the funding to stay open.

But, sometimes, we have to fight for the funding. Not against each other—but it kind of ends up being that way because we are all competing for the same grants and the same money. That just makes it less cooperative than we would prefer. And resources too, just the funding and the resources to be able to have all the things that we need in place to serve the community. That's what all the organizations want. None of us are in it for the money or it wouldn't be "nonprofit."

I know, right? (Laughter)

We're all just trying to make our communities better and make the individuals have all the stuff they need. And our community needs it. We've got a lot of people struggling. And there are a lot of places that can help—it would just be great if we could all do it together. >

Afterward

As I was conducting the interview, I was able to see a baby being carried first by a gentleman and then by a lady. The baby was so calm and relaxed in their arms. It pulled at my heart to see how much Lily's Place cares for these families. From the front desk person with the caring smile all the way to the clear mission of making healthy babies by making healthy families. - Lisa

For more from Lisa Hamm, see her essay, "Intersectionality, Identity, and Domestic Violence: A Former Police Officer Weighs In." It was published in the Spring 2025 Graduate Humanities

(<https://www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities/newsletter/>).

6. Best Collaboration? Creating Warming Shelters

An Interview with Kerri Cooper, by Makayla Hosey

Kerri Cooper, Community Impact Director of the United Way of Central West Virginia, was interviewed by Makayla Hosey, Student, Marshall University Graduate Humanities Program, April 9, 2025, 2:00pm-2:30pm, on Zoom.



Kerri Cooper

< Makayla Hosey: What is your role and what does that consist of?

Kerri Cooper: My job as Community Impact Director consists of meeting people where they are. Whether that's a board room, under a bridge, in a school—wherever they are—to help them put their best foot forward. Our goal is to mobilize individuals in a community for a stronger community. We don't use donor dollars; I apply for funding for direct service.

My day-to-day is different every day. For example, we answer West Virginia 211 calls in this building. Today, our call specialist is out so that is also in my role. This morning I've helped individuals with their rent and electricity. I've filled a couple of food baskets this



"United Way mobilizes communities to action so all can thrive."

United is the way."

morning, so that they have something to eat. I helped two individuals this morning come in because it's still cold at night.

Can you tell me a story about when you had a sense of wonder because collaboration between the one non-profit you were in and another non-profit your group was working with went beyond anticipated limits? And as many details that you would like to provide would be wonderful.

A sense of wonder? It was Martin Luther King's birthday weekend... and it was gonna be . . . cold. So, Margaret O'Neal, President of United Way West Virginia, got permission for a warming shelter. So, not an all-night, everyday shelter. This was . . . It's cold, there's nowhere for anyone to go. People were gonna freeze to death on

the streets. Got permission for that. I volunteered to go. And we went the first night and there were 26 individuals in that room. Our vision then was to bring them in, keep them warm, give them coffee until 9 o'clock, turn that off, send them to bed. But we figured out after the first night, that if you feed them, more will come.

And, for five years, we opened warming centers, all through the winter when the temperature was at the designated temperature. At that time there were five agencies that came together and to see to it that 80 to 90 individuals were warm and made it through the night. In addition, there were five or six churches that provided dinner, so they had something warm to eat. There were clothes, so they had warm clothes when they had to go back outside.

That was fabulous! And now the juicy details: It was scary. It was fabulous. Right? So you felt warm from the inside out.

It was smelly. It was maybe the loudest room I've ever been in. Even when they were all asleep, it was very loud—because you are looking at the reasons that those in our community are not (sigh) housed. Right? And this is America and it's 2025—and why not? Whatever the reason: "I'm addicted to drugs." "I'm a prostitute." "I'm estranged from my family." Whatever the reason. "Why is there not somewhere safe and warm for you to be?"

I don't understand that.

If we're going to be the greatest country in the world, then we need to take care of our people in the world.

And, you know, you have a lot of individuals who are not mentally able to take care of themselves. You get so mad at them. But you love them all in the same breath. It's like having children. 'I love you, I love you, I love you—but what in the world?' They're not doing the things you think they should do. But just because you don't follow x-y-z, does not mean that you shouldn't get the help and the care you deserve or need. That's crazy.

And then you go home. And you crawl into your bed. And you're warm and fuzzy, because "Oh, I'm doing good, I'm a do-gooder."

Her voice falters.

And then you feel so guilty. How did I get so lucky to have a house, to have a bed, to be warm? Why is that fair? Right? How does that work? So, you feel guilty.

But then you go back the next night and you're like, "Okay, I got to go home and sleep a few hours and now I'm back and I'm going to do this again."

That may be the best collaboration I've been a part of.

Thank you for sharing that story!

Without being humble, what did you personally bring to this experience?

I brought organizational skills. I brought 'the Mean Mommy.' I brought dependability. If I looked at you and said, 'I don't have it with me, but tomorrow, you can come and get'. Then you're gonna come and get. If that means taking it out of my husband's closet, my kids' closet, going to buy it on my way in. You were going to get it. I didn't make false promises.

That's really admirable, to be able to follow up like that and be so dependable. I'm sure that was an incredible moment for the people you helped.

And it's building relationship you need to have with them, to get them into a housing situation. If you break a promise—or lie or stretch or forget—[they say] "I don't trust you." "I don't have to." "Moving on." And not everybody likes everybody. You may not like me, but you like her, and I can get the stuff, but she can make the promise . . . it's irrelevant who does it, as long as it gets accomplished.

Speaking of, 'it doesn't matter who does it,'—is there anyone you want to talk about and what were their contributions to the event?

Margaret O'Neal. She knew exactly how it should work. Then you had Traci Strickland, of Kanawha Valley Collective, who knew exactly how to execute that plan. Between the two of them, it was a brilliant brainchild. And now that's being modeled all across the state and in other areas. I think there were, like, seven other places this winter that had them.

The first five years were all volunteers. No one was paid. No one. But Margaret and Traci dreamed it up and made it happen. It was nice to be a foot soldier in that.

You mentioned some organizational things. What other strategies were in place?

Treat me like an adult and I'll act like an adult. If I am earning my living on the street corner, and I have to go out and meet my person at 2 o'clock, I can stay until 1:45. Do what I have to do, and be back at 3:15, and be warm. There should be no expectation as to what that looks like. If I have to be at 7/11 at 4:00 AM for my shift, I should get to leave at 3:00.

Market by word of mouth. I'd put something on Facebook that said, "Warming Center tonight, Salvation Army, 7 to 7." Maybe three people saw it on Facebook, but those three people in that community will tell three people who tell three people. You go all the way

through that, and by the end of the evening, 150 people have come for food. Then you also have the City of Charleston, the Kanawha Valley Collective, the Salvation Army, sharing it on their Facebook pages, as well as the churches providing the food. Lots of individuals in the community will see it on something. It may not be the Facebook page, but they saw it somewhere.

Gather warm winter needs. Blankets and coats, hats, gloves, and hand warmers, as well as paper towels, toilet paper, coffee, hot chocolate, and bottled water—so it costs less on the facility hosting and less on the churches overall.

Volunteer. OK, so you can't come tonight and you're not cooking with the church, you bring three cases of water, right? You've done your part.

As a community, if we all do our part that makes the load much lighter to carry.

I like that. Even if a handful of people contribute, that's still a handful of people.

Yes. And if that handful of people tell another handful of people, who tell another handful of people—then we're at fifteen.

If you could have three wishes to further collaboration between organizations, what would they be and how would you know they worked?

I would like more organizations to come together with [ALICE](#) (Asset Limited Income Constraint and Employed). So, you make minimum wage, and you've got you and two kids, you make too much to get public assistance, federal or state—but you don't make enough to do anything with it. You're still starving, you're living paycheck to paycheck.

And then you get a flat tire on the way to work, that screws up your whole world. You can't pay your electric bill now. The dog gets sick. You've got to go to the dentist. One hiccup could rock your whole world and cause you to be homeless.

But if there was a bucket of money for individuals who are "ALICE" to call and say, 'Hey, this happened to me, and now I can't pay rent.' And I could say, 'Here is this little dab of money to get you through this time.'

United Way of Central West Virginia is a part of ALICE now, but we don't have enough to help everybody. And I'd know it worked because ALICE never calls me back. I'd never hear from that ALICE again. Because of our use of ALICE, we know that fourteen people stayed housed. Seventeen people had electricity. Thirty-five kids didn't know mom was struggling, didn't know they were almost homeless.

So...the second wish. You've got three.

I wish that counselors in school systems had more resources. Not just, 'I'm going to come in and read to your kids today and everything is going to be great.' I wish they had someone to support them, support all those kids. If I'm in a school with 350 kids, and I've got two school counselors—there's no getting in and teaching

them how to deal with their big feelings, or how to behave in class, or how to treat their neighbor. There's none of that now. They're too busy pulling people out of the river to keep them from drowning to plan for the future.

And the third wish?

Now, my third wish—I wish that there was a better transportation portal. Whether that's non-profit or for-profit, I don't care. In Appalachia, to get from A to B, you have to have a car. If I don't have a car, I can't get to the grocery store and I can't get to treatment if I have opiate addictions, if I decide I want to. Our state needs transportation. I don't care how it looks.

If collaboration flourishes among non-profits in West Virginia, what do you see happening in the non-profit world? What is different, and how do you know it?

I think we can make a stronger impact if we're not all living in silos—"United Is the Way." That would be fewer struggling ALICEs. A little bit better transportation. Counselors would have organizations that come in and do workshops with the parents. Or they do some of that behavioral training that counselors can no longer do. You'd be able to tick off all those things that are there, we know they're there, but we don't have enough time or resources. Fewer individuals that are struggling every day to keep their head above water. Not even get out. Just neck deep.

Collaboration works to a degree. But we're all competing for the same dollar. That makes it really hard. You have to get people who really don't care about who gets credit.

That's fair. Hard to find.

Very. >

Afterword

While I had known about some of United Way of Central West Virginian's fundraisers, I didn't know the extent of what Kerri Cooper does. When discussing the warming centers and hearing the emotion in her voice, I felt admiration for what she and United Way accomplish daily. The passion and drive shown in this interview makes me excited to watch as the United Way of Central West Virginia continues to fill in the gaps. - Makayla

For more from Makayla Hosey, see her interview "You End Homelessness by Housing People" with Traci Strickland, a colleague of Kerri's published, published in the 2025 Graduate Humanities.
(<https://www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities/newsletter/>)



Makayla Hosey

7. Giving People a Voice They Didn't Have

An Interview with Sarah Mathis, by Clara Jones

Sarah Mathis, Advocate Resources, Disability Rights of West Virginia, was interviewed by Clara Jones, Graduate Studies Student in Humanities at Marshall University over the phone on Monday, April 21st, at 10:00 am.



Clara Jones (left) and Sarah Mathis

< I interviewed Sarah over the phone instead of in-person due to repeated scheduling conflicts. She was extremely accommodating and interested in talking about her experience as a member of Advocate Resources for Disability Rights in Charleston, West Virginia. She also has an interest, as do I, in establishing another Disability Rights (DR) office in Huntington, West Virginia. Sarah is particularly passionate about rejecting the current cultural push against disability rights which naturally enraged quadriplegics and people with disabilities. She believes that the current public sentiment is detrimental to the health of those with disabilities.

Clara Jones: As you already know, this interview on "No Limits to Collaboration Between Nonprofits" is to get an idea of the kind of work you do within Disability Rights.

Sarah Mathis: As an Advocate, I strive to be in-tune with the needs of disabled communities all over the state. And I use my position to inform individuals with disabilities of their rights, how to self-advocate, and how to stand up for themselves; as well as organizing meetings and making resources available to those who self-select.

My connection to disabilities is because my younger brother was born blind with cerebral palsy, and it's influenced my whole life to make sure that those with disabilities are

adequately educated as to their rights and not recreate the same ignorance I experienced growing up.

Has there ever been a specific instance that really inspired hope for you?

There's an organization called FairShake Network, Inc. in West Virginia that does a really good job of training self-advocates. So I got to go to their two-day training with my mentor and all these people with developmental disabilities.

Independent living is as nearly as important as being educated in the law itself.

I got to be on the panel teaching these people that society maybe doesn't think they can do things like voting and talking to legislators . . . just watching these individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities become these very well spoken advocates who fight for their rights better than people you would think would be good at it.

And to also learn how to take care of themselves independently. Independent living is as nearly as important as being educated in the law itself.

It was just an amazing experience . . . It just shows you that you can do so much. You shouldn't limit people with disabilities. And just showing you that they're breaking down those barriers...It's a very neat thing to see.

Would you share an impactful experience on your career as a disability rights advocate?

My history with disability advocacy and empowerment has given me an exceptional experience of getting to work with a mentor that would put me in a place to enrich the lives of those around me. This experience stands out because I believe projects like FairShake lead to a better, broader opportunity base for those struggling with disabilities and seeking a way to change their lives.

Sarah's mentor was a disabled person who founded FairShake and had been working in the disability circuit her entire life; she had spina bifida and other high-needs disabilities, which made her dedication to working in the physical world all the more admirable. Her mentor had been told that she wasn't able to go to

elementary school, and instead blew it out of the water and earned multiple master's degrees before she passed.

My mentor organized these FairShake events as a method of teaching others with disabilities how to be their own boss and speak up for themselves. Her work hasn't gone unlauded. We were the first state that designated a West Virginia History week in October, and since then, so many states have followed through.

There have been many efforts to improving the quality of life for those in West Virginia, but as much as there is a push forward, there will be a push back. She describes her work with independent living centers, offshoots of the FairShake independent living initiative, and how these centers focus on assistive technology and education, rather than doing everything for the person with disabilities.

Sarah describes this process as "reactive" – meaning, they take each case as it comes, and work with individuals depending on their needs. As much as they would like to dive in and go off script with their assistive help, there's only so many moves they can make as a grassroots organization. But they try as hard as they can, falling in line with FairShake's motto – "People with disabilities deserve a fair shake at life."

We do more education. But it's reactive. I only have to get a case first. They do a lot of like assistive technology. And things. And so we all have our piece of the puzzle.

The most prescient part of Sarah's exceptional experience wasn't just getting to work with influential disabled people, but getting to encourage others and seeing their efforts bear fruit as she continues to work with Disability Rights.

There is not a linear arrow for growth, especially with disabilities, so she emphasizes that she learned how people's attitudes need to be changed before anything else.

I've been out with my brother and people stop and say to me, "I have one like him at home." There's a stigma and we just gotta break it. I love West Virginians. I love West Virginia. But we have the "Oh, bless her heart" kind of mentality. And so that that has to be changed, too. I do feel like it's a mind-set thing.

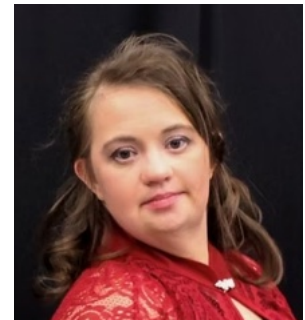
I specifically think about how RFK, Jr. or our legislators making these claims that autistic people will never write a poem, they'll never ride a bike, never pay taxes . . . do you think programs like these are taking us a step in the right direction about what we think people with intellectual and physical disabilities are capable of?

100 percent! Back in the day, the solution was institutions. We know from history that those easily turned into systems of abuse and neglect. West Virginia has a dark history of disability rights. And we know that we can't do that again. So teaching people with disabilities to be self-advocates and getting them community-based services has really been empowering.

So people with autism are leading; "That's not our lives." And they are sharing their personal testimonies. And their personal stories are far more weighty than by-standers saying that's not a good idea.

Creating self-advocates is what makes the difference. You know that movie in which a guy was injured and he was quadriplegic and he chose to do euthanasia? Well, that naturally enraged quadriplegics. And people with disabilities were saying, "Are

What I Want You to Know About People with Developmental Disabilities



By Lynsay Frye

I want to start off with the most important thing.....people with developmental disabilities are PEOPLE!

- * I am not my disability but my disability is part of who I am.
- * I would like to be defined by who I am as a person and not my abilities.
- * I am a unique individual with knowledge, skills, talents, interests and experiences.
- * I do not want your pity.
- * Please take the time to get to know me.
- * I have my own identity.
- * I feel the same emotions that you do.
- * I have interests and hobbies.
- * I experience romantic relationships.
- * Relax and be yourself when you are getting to know me.

Regardless of the type and degree of the disability, everyone is entitled to choices and the ability to exercise as much personal control as they can on their own or with assistance. I may do things differently than you do but we strive for the same outcomes. Let me be a productive member of society, my contributions may surprise you!

Source: <https://www.drofww.org/march2023newsletter>. Accessed 3.11.26

you saying we're not enough? Like, this isn't a death sentence." Would you rather be dead than disabled? And they did huge protests at all the movie theaters showing this movie. It made the national news.

Remember the **504 Sit-in** protest for the Rehabilitation Act of 1973? Thousand protested in the bigger cities and in D.C. The 504 sit-ins were amazing and lasted 30-something days. I mean people with severe disabilities, high needs, and others sat who had no power, no food, no electricity. They supported each other. And the long-delayed regulations, originally created in 1973, were signed on April 28, 1977.

For people with disabilities you have to create self advocacy to create change. We are where we are because of self-advocacy. And our agency and the agencies in West Virginia helped create that self advocacy that creates change so we won't go back.

People with disabilities like the autism and deaf communities are saying "There's nothing wrong with us. We are autistic or deaf. We're proud. We need support. We don't need to be stigmatized and shunned."

I asked Sarah to give me three wishes for collaborations between organizations in her work.

Three wishes . . . she clicked her tongue . . .

I wish that more young people will have a passion.

The older individuals that made Disability Rights as powerful as it is are retiring and pulling back from public life, thus creating what Sarah feels is a vacuum for future advocates.

My second wish is for more person-centered care. There is more overlapping

communication between agencies, more emphasis on the larger sociopolitical impact, and less focus on the individual.

Essentially, the focus on cases closed is more indicative of traditional company success, while in the same vein, those people served are not always getting the amount of care promised to them.

My third wish is for collaboration . . . I do think, especially since COVID, we've had a real disconnect and not been able to be together as much. So my third wish is that we get back together more, that there be cohesiveness.

Sarah misses the amount of things they'd do in-person, and feels that programs like FairShake wouldn't even exist without people like herself and her mentor physically showing up and putting their bodies in the environment.

I steered our last question a bit outside of the established questions we had for this interview. I asked about how she felt about the aftermath of COVID and its effects on the disabled population of West Virginia, especially as a mass disabling event between 2018 and

I strongly believe the online world has assisted in reframing disabilities in ways otherwise unavailable and gave many people a voice that didn't have one.

2022. Do you think, in the wake of COVID and other mass disabling events that put us on the same level, that we're going to reframe how we think about disabilities?

I don't know. I there's been a large pushback. I see it, I mean look at who we've elected in all of our offices and who pushback against "PC" culture. In this regard, maybe not so much.

But I do think what COVID did was put a lot of people with disabilities and supportive communities online with large followings, like there's a whole subculture on TikTok and Instagram.

So, I think in that regard, Yes. I strongly believe the online world has assisted in reframing disabilities in ways that were otherwise unavailable and gave a lot of people a voice that didn't have one.

Ok, well thank you, Sarah. I really appreciate all this. Thank you so fucking much, girl. >

Afterword

My conversation with Sarah Mathis inspired a fire in my heart that already existed from having a disabled nephew, but doubled twofold due to the overwhelming odds against them. This conversation and interview has changed the way I want to drive my activism and the kind of work I want to do in order to make the world a better place. >

Clara Jones is a graduate student at Marshall University pursuing her Master of Arts in Humanities and an Appalachian Studies Certificate. A Creative Writing undergraduate alum of Marshall and lifelong Appalachian, Clara hopes to enrich her writing with stories from the highest peaks to the lowest valleys of Appalachia, starting at home first. She wants to take as many opportunities as possible to challenge established negative views of the region. Her academic interests range from the development of an Appalachian identity to the role art plays in local rural communities. In her free time, Clara whiles away the hours snuggling one of her four pet cats, reading about Appalachian culture, and relaxing with her family.

8. For the Love of God, Mentor Young People

An Interview with Amanda Page, by Kathaleen Kuhn-Book

Amanda Page, Founder of Scioto Literary and Peerless Productions was interviewed in-person by Kathaleen Kuhn-Book, Student, Marshall University Graduate Humanities Program, April 8, 2025, 10:00 - 10:36 am at Portsmouth Public Library.

SCIOTO LITERARY



Source: <https://www.sciotoliterary.com/>



Amanda Page



Source: <https://www.peerlesscity.com/>



Amanda on the Scioto River

< Kathaleen Kuhn-Book: When I found Scioto Literary online, I knew Amanda Page, the organization's founder, would be a great candidate to interview for the Nonprofits in Appalachia seminar I was taking. I emailed Amanda the interview background information, questions, and consent form. Amanda was excited to participate in this project, and we scheduled the interview for the following week at the Portsmouth Public Library.

We took a seat in the basement meeting room of the library. I started recording and asked Amanda to provide some background information about herself and her work with nonprofits. Like myself, Amanda is a Scioto County native, a point on which we connected throughout the interview.

Amanda completed her undergraduate work at Ohio University and received a Master of Fine Arts and Creative Writing from the University of Alabama. In addition to her nonprofit work, Amanda is a professor at Shawnee State University. She credits "working as a volunteer for an arts organization in Columbus for getting her really connected into the world of nonprofits and board service."

For how Amanda started her own nonprofit, Scioto Literary, she recalled that during the 2020 Pandemic Quarantine she was scrolling through Twitter for a new show when someone suggested she watch "Moundsville: A Small American Town in the Age of Trump" on PBS. She loved this documentary, connected with one of the directors through Twitter, met the Moundsville directors for lunch, and asked, "Can we do

this for Portsmouth?" And they did. (Peerless City can be watched <https://www.pbs.org/video/peerless-city-t8ukub/>). She created Peerless City Productions as the film production arm of Scioto Literary.

In a follow-up email, Amanda explained how Scioto Literary and Peerless City Productions work together. She originally started Scioto Literary as a 501c3 because "if you're asking for any money that comes through federal dollars - and state arts and humanities councils often count because they are pass-throughs for federal dollars - then you have to be your own entity. You can't work with a fiscal sponsor. It has to be independent. When it came time to premiere the documentary, I didn't want 'Scioto Literary' in the credits because I thought of it as one piece but not the whole. I knew I'd want to make other films, so instead of starting a new entity, I chose to do a 'Doing Business As'—a legal designation that allows an entity to use two different names interchangeably.

It was the right choice, because it allows Peerless City Productions to do the film work and still stay a part of Scioto Literary, which does everything else.

My goal was to continue to grow Scioto Literary and host a local literary or poetry festival. I opened a dialogue with community members and is kind of doing an audit of the current literary landscape and seeing what we can create from there.



So, Amanda, can you tell me a story of when you had a sense of wonder because the collaboration between one nonprofit you were involved in and another nonprofit group went above and beyond expected limits.

Amanda smiled brightly.

I kind of live in a sense of wonder. I have to say that the folks I collaborate with most here in Portsmouth are Dr. Andrew Feight, Director, Center for Public History at Shawnee State University and Cassie Patterson, Executive Director, Southern Ohio Folklife. I actually share an office with Cassie. We share a lot of resources . . . It's really interesting with my interdisciplinary background, to have to work so closely with Andrew, who is a historian, who really knows his methodology, right? And then with Cassie, who is a trained folklorist and knows her methodology. And I've done a little journalism, done some creative writing . . . it's just interesting to see how our approaches are so different.

I agree. What was your contribution to this successful collaborative? (Laughter)

Oh, God, it may be my whole self. I just sort of feel like there's a narrative arc for coming back home. I can remember being 17 and driving around Portsmouth and . . . when you're in high school here, the overwhelming narrative is that 'There's nothing to do.' And it's funny, because now everything I did then—drive around, look at architecture, take walks, talk to my friends, and read books—is what I do now. So I think my contribution is maybe my whole self.

Tying into Amanda's work with Peerless City Productions, she cites Portsmouth's slogan, "Where Southern Hospitality Begins," as part of how she ended in Alabama, where she completed her MFA.

Even while Amanda has lived all over the country, she says, "I have kind of lived my life with an eye on Portsmouth. I'm really interested in urban planning and city revitalization. . . . So it's probably no surprise that I do something like Peerless City, where I'm looking at slogans and how they affect the city. So I think it's like my contribution is just bringing my whole self to it."

Things don't always go as planned when it comes to collaborating. What keeps you going?

If I quit, then who's going to pick it up? Yeah, and I care too much about the community. I care too much about wanting this to exist, so maybe, maybe my biggest contribution is just my stubbornness. I won't say resilience, because I feel like communities like ours have been hailed too much for our resilience.

It's great to be resilient, but it's also exhausting. So I think that, yeah, I bring my stubbornness to some degree.

Do you have any friends or family who are also involved in this nonprofit space?

When I moved back to Portsmouth, I was happy to find people who got it, who understood, you know, the desire to have a nonprofit and to do this type of arts and culture work. She laughs as she explains that once you get involved in these collaborations, they tend to grow into symbiotic relationships, where nonprofit professionals serve on each other's boards and share resources.

So, yeah, there's a lot of that. My friends are my collaborators, for sure, and it stretches. I mean, not just here in Portsmouth, but there's, you know, a region that we're working within.

Are there other organizations that support you in your work?

The Appalachian Studies Association conference is the one conference I don't want to miss because I know people there. My collaborations are started there...So, those kinds of things happen on a much broader scale. I like to make those connections for people, and when people make those connections for me.

I think that by leading through collaboration—and by leading, I don't mean just necessarily an organization, but like your life, by collaboration—you're kind of sidestepping that old way of thinking about competition, that we're all in competition.

And I do think that's a generational way of thinking, and the younger generation gets that, like, it's better to collaborate, more will get done. But I still think that there's an Appalachia factor definitely in Portsmouth, there's still like, a lot of like, tension about the right way to do things.

As a young professional myself, what advice can you give those just starting their work with nonprofits?

I think it would be twofold. Don't take any shit and don't let the bastards get you down. Part of my personal journey is to learn to stand up for myself. So that's probably terrifying, I think, for a lot of young people starting out because you want so badly to make your name, do a good job.

I laugh and appreciate my own unvoiced thoughts. I resonate with the struggle of standing up for yourself while navigating the workforce.

But the advice I would give to mid-career or late-career people is, for the love of God, mentor young people. They're not, they're not coming for your job, like the way that I know people get fearful about it, or they might change the way something is done. But that doesn't mean you don't have a legacy to give.

I've never really thought about that until Amanda put it that way. It really does make sense because there is such a disconnect between the two groups. What are some things within organizations that foster a community of collaboration and being more open?

You have to have a collaborative personality on the team somewhere in the organization, and that same collaborative personality needs to understand the importance of systems. By systems I mean things that give the organization structure and allow for continuity through staffing changes and organization growth, mission and values, newsletters, and more. You need to have an open-minded, enthusiastic person in a role. And part of the culture is constantly thinking about succession, like the handoff plan, right?

Because we've lost so much. Like, no one's picked up the baton, and I don't think that's necessarily the fault of the people who were doing the work. But where do you communicate that? Or how do you get young people involved, especially in an area where we lose so many of our young people? I think that's where you need, you know, a system for mentorship, a system for creating a culture that feels like a community, not a family, a community.

So elaborate more on what you mean by community versus family?

I was in an organization where the director and other leaders were referred to as "Daddy" and "Mom," or "Sis." It always made me angry because we're not a family. We're spearheading this organization. I've got a family and I'm working through those issues. That language and dynamic are not conducive to a professional organization. It created a weird tension. I understand what it's meant to foster, however, if you're volunteering, you have a duty to the organization, but the Executive Director is not your Daddy. The too-familiar relationships can alter a volunteer's sense of duty to the organization. Work is not family. It's just not. Even when it's a family business, there needs to be a line.

What organizational strategies have you implemented in your work?

Boundaries. Yeah. Boundaries. I'm not great at it. How do I be the adult in the room? Here's what I'm willing to create. Here's what I'm willing to take responsibility for. What am I willing to keep hands off? Knowing when to quit. . . . That's a work in progress.

Speaking of systems, I'm a big fan of structure. So, you know, what do the bylaws look like? What's our strategic plan, our job descriptions . . . We need to have all the standard operating procedures I've asked for

So I want all that stuff done upfront. Right? And then administrative procedures, so the next person can just walk in and pick them up. I think that's important to have that kind of structure too, so it's not, it's not led by a personality coming in, and who says, 'we're going to do this.' No, look, look, we have a structure, this is how we do it. We can change it.

I don't want to be rigid about it, and, you know, we're doing it this way because we've always done it this way, but we need a foundation to build from.

I think that is a big stumbling block for a lot of nonprofits, especially getting off the ground, because everyone has these great ideas and everyone wants to make a change, but whenever you have actual boots on the ground, you need to have an actual plan.

Yes! Plans are important, but I'm also a big fan of improv. As I previously mentioned, having the organization's strong building blocks already in place allows for improvisation while remaining true to the organization's mission and values. Live by them.

Conversation, collaboration, and mentorship were some of the biggest takeaways from my past work. Also learning about the funding and grant aspects of nonprofits. And my friends. And Math? That took more time. (Laughter)

I credit all these things for my confidence in starting Scioto Literacy.

If you had three wishes to further collaboration between nonprofit organizations, what would they be, and how would you know that they worked?

I'm gonna work on this question backwards because I would know they worked because shit would get done.

One of my wishes is to reduce the time spent on convincing the older generation to hand off some of their power. This can be a discouragement for younger people to get involved, and organizations need to remember they are there for the betterment of the community as a whole and not focus on misplaced competition.

My friends know I love the word "Pivot." Like if you don't get this grant, pivot to the next way to fund something. I know there's a lot of fear right now with everything going on with the government. But I think I've disassociated from it because I keep saying, "Well, it's an opportunity to pivot."

Another wish might be the way that philanthropy works, and more funders would fund operating support.

Maybe my third wish . . . Someone mentioned in a strategic planning meeting for the Appalachian Regional Commission that one thing that holds Appalachia back is "misplaced competition." So I guess I'm working to really understand the causes and possible solutions to "misplaced competition," really defining it.

How do you reframe some of this toxicity and negativity for yourself?

People say enthusiasm is my superpower. I just knock them over with some enthusiasm, man, like, if you can get them excited about something. I think I have to reframe it for a lot of other people, too.

It's good to know your obstacles. So, everyone wants to be a part of something cool, right? And it's just, you just have to help them see it.

Is there anything else you'd like to add before we close the interview?

Yeah, I will say, I have seen a lot of willingness to collaborate since I've been here, and I think that's really exciting.

I closed the interview by thanking Amanda for her time. >



*If you have something to share,
please let us know.*

Afterword

I truly enjoyed this assignment as it has led to both a professional relationship between Scioto Literacy and my business, KB Media, and a friendship between Amanda and me. We have discussed the possibility of creating another video project under Peerless City Productions this year, and I look forward to seeing Scioto Literacy expand. - Kathaleen

Kathaleen Kuhn-Book is pursuing a master's degree in humanities and an Appalachian Studies certificate; her undergraduate degree is a Bachelor of Science in agricultural communications from The Ohio State University. Kathaleen and her husband, Wesley, co-own and operate her family's 3rd-generation grain and cattle farm on the banks of the Little Scioto River near Minford, Ohio. Kathaleen owns KB Media, a photo, video, and drone multi-media agency, www.kbmediaco.com. In her free time, she enjoys volunteering with local 4-H and FFA groups to promote agri-literacy and youth development.



Kathaleen Kuhn-Book

The breeze at dawn has secrets
to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth across the
doorsill where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.

Rumi (1207-1273)
Sufi mystic and poet

Fall 2026 SCHEDULE

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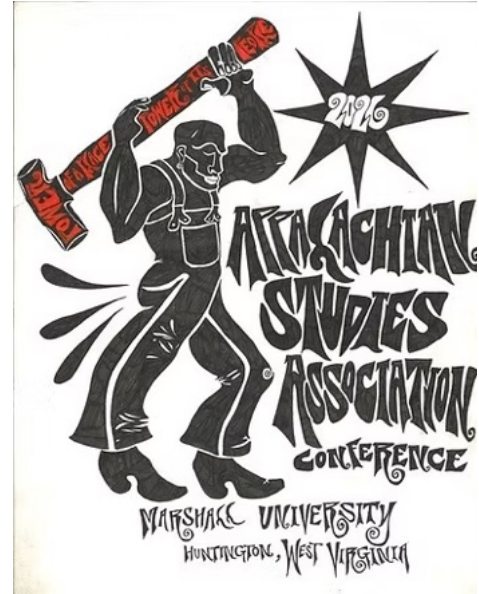
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Marshall University GRADUATE HUMANITIES PROGRAM

Snapshots of graduates, faculty, community members, and friends who attended, presented, and conversed at the Appalachian Studies Association Conference, March, 2026, Huntington, West Virginia.



(This continues on the next page.)



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marshall.edu/graduatehumanities/

OUR APPALACHIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE PANEL A team of faculty, students, and local nonprofit leaders engaged in the "New Generation Change Agents in Appalachia" documentary project reflected on our recent collaborative book-writing project, its implications, and possibilities for future work.



OUR BOOK

New Generation Change Agents in Appalachia documentary project sponsored by Marshall University John Deaver Drinko Academy.

