

**“ROOTS WITH WINGS:
Fostering Resiliency and Building Skills with Youth
in Floyd County, Virginia”**

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Final Report Narrative

Title of Project: “ROOTS WITH WINGS: Fostering Resiliency and Building Skills with Youth in Floyd County, Virginia”

Grant Period: January 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016

Grantee Name: Radford University

Project Director: Theresa L. Burriss

Description of Project:

The ROOTS WITH WINGS: Floyd County Place-based Education Oral History Project plants the *roots* of the “web of meaningful relationships” found to be a factor in community resilience (Clauss-Ehlers 2004; Clauss-Ehlers & Lopez-Levi, 2002; Kirmayer 2009). At the same time the Project affixes state-of-the-art technology *wings*. The ATP students become mentors working as part of an intergenerational team to teach high school students how to:

- conduct ethical, methodologically sound interviews;
- record using state-of-the-art audio and video equipment;
- transcribe verbatim;
- create searchable tables of content;
- research historical background;
- archive;
- discover stories and themes in interviews;
- use qualitative methodology and inductive reasoning to extract a theme from hour-long interviews;
- develop storyboards;
- write summaries of their movie ideas of various lengths for various audiences;
- create movies;
- write evaluative commentaries for the Project as a whole and for the written and oral teaching methods;
- write reflective journals, connecting the Project’s goals to their own lives and futures.

The overall goals of the Project are forging connections, building technology skills, conserving history and culture, fostering intergenerational understanding, and developing interest in higher education.

The Spring 2015 Radford University Appalachian Teaching Project course was cross-listed as APST 495/595 Research in Appalachia and SOCY 493 Practicum in Sociology (3 credits), taught by Dr. Melinda Bollar Wagner, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and Appalachian Studies. The Radford University Appalachian Teaching Project ROOTS WITH WINGS mentors were embedded into a Floyd County High School class – Digital Video and Multi Media Technology -- once a week. (The high school class meets 5 days a week for 90 minutes.) The Spring 2015 ATP course utilized the workbook exercises curriculum materials developed in the Fall 2014 ATP course, taught by Dr. Theresa Burriss.

Activities:

- Activities with community partners (include partner name(s), dates and locations of meetings, topics of focus-group discussions, etc.):
 - Weekly meetings of mentors with community partners: Floyd Story Center at the Old Church Gallery (a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization) Co-directors, Kathleen Ingoldsby and Catherine Pauley, January – May 2015 at Floyd County High School
 - Weekly class/workshop sessions with Floyd County High School (FCHS) teacher, Angela Myers, and 16 students, January – May 2015 at Floyd County High School.
 - 425 E-mail messages from community partners to RU professor, January – May 2015
 - 903 E-mail messages from RU professor to community partners and RU student mentors, January – May 2015
 - Wrap-up, debriefing session at Radford University with community partners, to plan for the future, May 5, 2015
- Required presentations of student research to community groups other than the primary partner (include the name of the group(s), the date of the presentation(s), and document publicity surrounding the presentation in the attachment section below):
 - Radford University Student Engagement Forum, April 22, 2015, Radford University, Radford, Virginia. Oral presentation, PowerPoint, and Poster session.
 - Celebration and Movie Viewing, May 27, 2015, Floyd County High School.
<http://www.floydstorycenter.blogspot.com/2015/05/showtime-at-high-school-mini-theater.html>
 - Appalachian Teaching Project Conference, December 4-5, 2015, Washington, D.C.
 - Appalachian Studies Association Conference, March 17 – 19, 2016, Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, WV. RU's ATP students presented on Friday, 3/17.
- Links to any videos or social media that show the students interacting with their community partner(s):
 - <http://www.floydstorycenter.blogspot.com/>

Weekly blog written by Radford University mentor, Caroline Leggett. The most recent post will appear. To see the weekly posts, click on “Older Posts” at the bottom of the screen. Each post contains text and photos describing and picturing the Radford University mentors interacting with the Floyd County High School students.

- Old Church Gallery Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Old-Church-Gallery/271233369688410?rf=154867344553985>

Project Outcomes:

Deliverable Products:

- Audio files and Transcriptions of 4 1-1.5 hour interviews, in 5-minute tracks. (Each track becomes a 5-minute audio file, to render the task of transcribing doable by the high school student. Also if a student falls behind on one track, another can more easily pick it up to finish).
50 audio files
50 WORD files: High school students’ original transcriptions
50 WORD files: The original transcription files corrected by another high school student
50 WORD files: The student corrected files corrected by a Radford University mentor
- Content Logs for each transcription track
50 files: High school students’ original content logs
50 files: The student files corrected by a Radford University mentor
- Video files for each of 4 interviews
- Scans of photographs and artifacts interviewees bring with them to the interviews
~200 scans
- Photographs
~350 photos of weekly class/Project meetings, Interviews, and Celebration/Movie Viewing
- Movies of ~9 minutes each
8 different movies, 2 for each of 4 interviewees
- Final Reflexive Papers
10-page paper in three parts: Suggestions, Evaluations, Reflections and Connections to coursework, for each RU mentor
1-3-page paper in three parts: Suggestions, Evaluations, Reflections and Connections to coursework, for each FCHS student
- Participation in Radford University’s Student Engagement Forum for the RU mentors:
 - Poster for Student Engagement Forum and ATP Conference

- Script
- PowerPoint file
- Celebration/Movie Viewing for students, parents, interviewees and families at end of semester
- Presentation Binders for Interviewees and families with copies housed in the Old Church Gallery archive, consisting of:
 - DVD of each movie
 - Audio file of interview
 In electronic and paper format:
 - Transcription
 - Content Log
 - Photographs
 - Scans of Photographs and Artifacts Interviewee provided on Interview Day

Intangibles:

Radford University student mentors gained leadership skills and confidence, enhanced their oral and written communication skills, and were given public forums in which to practice their skills. In recognition of gains made, during our debriefing discussion at the end of the semester, a student recounted the successful workshop that she led, and said, “I didn’t know I had it in me.”

Besides imparting skills of working in teams, transcribing, logging for content, analyzing transcriptions for themes, and moviemaking, the ROOTS WITH WINGS Project has as its goal enhancing young students’ resiliency by connecting them with a generation that endured hardship both on the home front and in the thick of war far away from Floyd County. A few excerpts from the high school students’ final papers demonstrate lessons learned.

Coping with Hardship:

Roots with Wings was an amazing project that I am so thankful to have participated in. I think it helped better me as a person, because I realized that though things may not be rainbows and sunshine all the time, I am so blessed that I did not have to endure the things they did. I learned that things get hard but they could be worse, and they will always get better.

I respect my elders more too because I realize that times were tougher back then, than they are now. Many of them may have grown up poor or low income because of the Great Depression. They had to work hard from the day they could walk, just to provide for their family.

I have always respected veterans a lot. Now I can relate more to what they went through and their experiences because of the interview and listening to the stories told. McCrey Shortt told many interesting stories that showed the hardships faced. [Mr. Shortt died June 15, 2015, three months after his participation in the Project and two weeks after he

and his family saw the resulting movie. His family has requested additional copies of our work.]

Recent research is raising alarms with regard to the effect the amount of time children are spending in front of a screen. “Media use is the amount of time per day spent using media such as television, computers, and audio devices. Adolescents (ages eight to 18) spend an average of seven and a half hours per day using such media.” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2013) That doesn’t include talking or texting on a mobile phone or using a computer for school. The Pew Internet Project and other reports found that teenagers’ average text count for a month was 4,000 texts. The dangers of the use, or overuse of technology include a narrowing of diverse experiences, and consequential effects on young people’s emerging identities. (That is, narrowed experiences and fewer unstructured opportunities for imagining reduce the fodder for creating identity.) (Vahlberg 2010; Pinker 2014; Greenfield 2015)

The ROOTS WITH WINGS Project turns this problem on its head, and uses technology in a positive way. The more obvious benefits of teaching the students the technology associated with transcribing, content log creation, and movie production in all of its phases are the skills that it engenders.

Learning New Technology and Work Styles was appreciated, according to the students’ words:

My favorite subject in school has always been history, and this project/class has allowed me to play a part in it, and learn straight from a WWII veteran, which was really exciting and interesting. Also, growing up in Floyd, it’s cool to hear about his life in Floyd in the 1940’s, 50’s etc.

The project was very interesting to work with the veterans. I enjoyed interviewing them and asking the questions that unlocked a world of stories. It also feels great to do it all by ourselves and have a product we can be proud of.

I think one of the best features of this class is the hands on parts of the class. It’s a lot more interesting when you get to work with the nice cameras, laptops, and other equipment yourself, instead of watching a teacher or someone else. Also, being able to be mostly independent on interview day, setting up cameras and other equipment ourselves, was good for us to learn how to get things done on our own.

The project was full of . . . learning, although our mentors ran us down on the basics, we often had to piece together the details and experiment to figure things out or get them to work. The movies especially were hands on learning, as we had to find workarounds to an issue, or just to make the quality better.

This particular use of technology also broadens the students’ experience with diversity, ameliorating the “diminishing experiences” effect of some uses of technology. It connects them to a generation with experiences very unlike their own.

Connecting to the Community:

I believe that if more students participated in this project, they would have a better connection with their fellow students and even people of a different generation. It gives you a better understanding of others' hardships, even if you haven't lived them. It relates to high school for me because I notice every day how disconnected people are from each other, especially students. Everyone goes through their own thing, but I guess no one really notices what the other person is going through or went through because we are all so wrapped up in our own problems that we can't be bothered to care.

I really loved being able to meet Mr. Nolen, and I felt so much more connected than I would have if I had just listened to an interview. I believe this project was one of the best things I have been a part of, and I would definitely rate it a 10/10. Thank you.

It really changed my view on things learning about life when our interviewee was growing up. It helped put things into perspective.

I've always respected veterans and people who served our country, but now that respect is even greater after interviewing one and learning about his service. . . . Hearing the stories about their life and service really helped.

My experience in this project has, indeed, changed my view of the older generation. I have come to realize, that at one point, we were all young. Everyone was a kid, we all played with our friends, got into a small arguments (and sometimes fights), and we all suffered hardships. It makes me think that no matter how old someone is, they probably aren't that much different from you.

Along with resiliency as a predictor for adaptation and success, recent research has emphasized the importance of self-control in children and youth. An impressive study led by researchers from Duke University and King's College London followed 1,000 children from birth to age 32, plus twins from birth to 12 years, with subject retention rates of 96%. The research design enabled parsing out the effects of childhood and adolescent self-control, intelligence and social class on adult outcomes of physical health, substance dependence, personal finances, and criminal offenses. The study showed that self-control is indeed a predictor of these measures of healthy adulthood. The prediction could be measured along a gradient – that is, the lower the self-control, the worse the adult outcomes (Moffitt et al 2011).

In Spring 2015, we were able to observe improvements in self-control among the young people in our Project. The Floyd County High School class was made up of students ranging from those needing remediation to gifted, from at-risk students to those headed for college. Two of the students had "anger management"/self-control issues. One has suspected autism. Others were quite shy. We and the FCHS administration observed positive changes in these students as they took on the important roles of *interviewer*, *videographer*, and *photographer*.

Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor (2013:149) wrote: "Every people has a past, but the dignity of a history comes when a community of scholars devotes itself to chronicling and

studying that past.” The ATP ROOTS WITH WINGS Project created a multi-generational community of scholars. The students’ words demonstrate that they understood the overall importance of the work. Their words show that

The Overall Importance of the Work Redounded to the Participants

I enjoy history a lot, along with oral history. So this project meant a lot to me. My grandpa is losing his memory now days and I know now more than ever how important it is to preserve memories.

This project is definitely something I will remember and take with me when I leave the high school. I think this was a great experience to have and could help me prepare for jobs I may have when I’m older. It’s also really an honor to do such a great thing for the interviewee’s family by preserving their stories and their history with these interviews and movies. I feel proud to have been involved in such an important project.

It means alot to me, I tried my best to put Mr. Kelley’s transcriptions and movie together, although I know I could have done better on the former. This project allowed me to do a service for one of our many amazing veterans, and honor him for serving our country.

I’ve always had a respect for veterans; my grandfather served in Vietnam. I have always loved hearing stories and seeing the light in their eyes when they talk about some mischief they had a part in, or the smile as they tell about coming home to their families. I respect them for everything they have done and continue to do for the younger generations. Some of them carry a heavy burden, scarred by the things they witnessed or did, but even then, they put on a smile and offer advice if you ask for it. There are things in life no one should have to endure, but the veterans and Americans came out fifty times stronger as people than they were before and if I could, I’d thank every one of them for what they went through to better their country.

The Project provides this set of Floyd County’s youth with roots and wings – a strong appreciation for the wisdom of their county’s elders, and technological skills to carry into the future.

Problems Encountered:

“Snow days” when Floyd County High School or Radford University or both were closed presented a challenge to our already demanding schedule. It could be said that these challenges trained and tested students’ ability to be flexible.

Program Continuation and Sustainability:

A number of personnel changes will occur in the near future in high school administration and faculty. The ROOTS WITH WINGS Project has strong community support from the non-profit organizations who are our community partners. We foresee continuing the Project, and adapting

it in line with suggestions from this year's RU ATP students, FCHS students, and community partners. It will not be Radford University's ATP in the future, however.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Our community partner, the Floyd Story Center at the Old Church Gallery, answered the question, "How do we build on community assets to shape a positive future for Appalachia?" by identifying an underutilized asset – the experiences and memories of our County's oldest generation. This generation has been labeled "The Greatest Generation," because of the era of the 1920s – 1940s that they experienced in the USA and in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Determining that connecting the high school generation to their elders was critical to fostering individual and community resiliency, the ROOTS WITH WINGS: Place-based Education Oral History Project was begun with the cooperation of Radford University and Floyd County High School.

A deeper connection to "Roots" strengthens each individual high school project participant. The communication, technological and team-building skills imparted in the Project add "Wings" to help them reach their own potential and increase Appalachia's capacity to compete in the global economy.

As noted above, our community partners are committed to the Project, and we foresee continuing the Project, adapting it in line with suggestions from this year's RU ATP students and FCHS student Project participants.

References Cited:

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Sotomayor, Sonia. 2013. My Beloved World. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

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Vahlberg, V. 2010. Fitting Into Their Lives: A Survey of Three Studies About Youth Media Usage. Arlington, VA: Newspaper Association of America Foundation.

Attachments (in PDF format):

Include such items as the following:

- Minutes of meetings with community partners
 - Weekly agendas and numerous E-mail messages available upon request
- Flyers, text for PSA announcements, etc.
Attached:
 - Mission and Goals Diagram for ROOTS WITH WINGS
 - Invitation to Celebration and Movie Viewing
- Photographs showing students in action
Attached:
 - RWW 2015 Group Photo of high school students, university mentors, and community partners
 - RWW RU student mentor teaching, RU mentors and FCHS students learning together
 - RWW Elder interviewees and high school interviewers/moviemakers at the Spring celebration and movie viewing, May 27, 2015
- PR such as newspaper articles, documentation of TV and radio spots, etc.
Attached:
 - The Floyd Press, April 2, 2015, “Roots with Wings Project Takes Off”*Clickable:*
 - Blog written weekly by RU student: <http://www.floydstorycenter.blogspot.com/>
 - Old Church Gallery Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Old-Church-Gallery/271233369688410?rf=154867344553985>
- Correspondence with community partners
 - “Know that I’ve personally gained much from the RU student collaboration. Each and every student has brought talent, thoughtfulness, and commitment to the

project. The synergy couldn't have been better!" (Kathleen Ingoldsby, Co-Director, Floyd Story Center at the Old Church Gallery)

- Weekly agendas and numerous E-mail messages available upon request