

The Harlan County Project: Phase 16

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PROJECT FOCI: As part of this project, classes operating through the Appalachian Program at Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College will work in partnership with community organizations in Harlan County to 1) Integrate technology training and 21st century workplace skills into the teaching of the humanities in an ARC-distressed county; and 2) Increase youth leadership and tourism capacity in an ARC-distressed county by engaging young people as leaders in theater production and the production a multi-county theater conference.

PROJECT DETAILS:

Course Number, Name, and Instructor: Focus 1: Humanities 202: Survey of Appalachian Studies, Robert Gipe instructor. Focus 2: THA 101: Introduction to Theater, Robert Martin instructor.

Community Partner(s): Focus 1: Higher Ground, a coalition of community members in Harlan County Appalshop, a media arts center in Whitesburg, Kentucky. Focus 2: Higher Ground and Pine Mountain Settlement School, an environmental education and community center in Harlan County. Higher Ground, a community arts program in Harlan County, Kentucky, in collaboration with theater artists from around the country, has created five original plays over the past ten years incorporating local stories, music, and actors.

Need: Harlan County needs economic renewal, and a source of hope and work experience for its young people. Appalshop and the SKCTC Appalachian Program will address the need to train the next generation of workers and leaders to create content for the web as well as audio and video, the tools of the new digital literacy. SKCTC will work with Pine Mountain Settlement School to help young leaders gain more experience in bringing visitors to Harlan County to work and learn, providing vital experience for increasing the county's capacity as a conference/tourism destination.

Number and description of planned meetings with the community partner: ATP students will meet with community partners on a monthly basis to plan radio programming and training and to plan a theater conference taking place in Harlan County. The anticipated total number of meetings between ATP students and community partners is 20.

Project overview, including its central focus (10-12 sentences)

Focus 1: Higher Ground Radio in the classroom. During the spring and summer of 2016, SKCTC students and staff worked with WMMT, Appalshop's community radio station, to produce a monthly hour-long radio news magazine called Shewbuddy Radio. Shewbuddy records scenes from Higher Ground community performances for radio broadcasts and then creates original interviews, music, and other recordings on the themes raised by the plays. Shewbuddy staff created podcasts of the on-air broadcasts during the summer of 2016, and as part of this project will pilot a new process for teaching audio and video production, including digital

editing and publishing as part of several classes at SKCTC, but particularly a Survey of Appalachian Studies class which will serve as SKCTC's 2016-2017 ATP class. The course is part of SKCTC's response to the POWER initiative, and preparing a workforce with 21st century digital skills. Podcasts can be found on iTunes at Shew Buddy! Higher Ground Radio. The plan is to expand the number of classes at SKCTC involved in the project in Spring 2017, and also to integrate Southeast Television into the classroom work.

Focus 2: The Hurricane Gap Community Theater Institute. Higher Ground, Clear Creek Creative, and Cowan Creek Community Theater Group will host the first Hurricane Gap Community Theater Institute (HGCTI) July 19-24 at Pine Mountain Settlement School in Harlan County, Kentucky. The Hurricane Gap Community Theater Institute will include four days of workshops for all interested in improving their community's capacity to present theater based on local stories and incorporating local music. Workshops will be led by theater professionals from across the country. Scheduled workshops include workshops in lighting design led by Peter Kallok, directing led by Richard Geer, acting led by Robert Martin, story collecting and script writing led by Anne Shelby, community music led by Paula Larke, and choreography led by Kevin Iega Jeff. The Kentucky Arts Council will also lead a daylong workshop on cultural assets mapping on Friday July 22nd. As part of the Institute, SKCTC will operate an Introduction to Theater course. This course will be part of SKCTC's ATP work. SKCTC students will also be engaged as interns at the conference, taking part in the leadership of conference design and coordination. The Institute will include performances by five community story play practitioners. On Friday July 22nd, The Cowan Creek Community Theater Group from Letcher County, and Harlan County's Higher Ground will perform. On Saturday, July 23rd, Monkey Dumplings from Clay County, Kentucky, Homesongs from Owsley County, Kentucky, as well as Divine Urban eXpressions from Knoxville, Tennessee will perform. Performances will take place at Cowan Community Center in Letcher County, Kentucky, and at the Godbey Appalachian Center in Cumberland, Kentucky.

Students in the two classes that are part of our 2016-2017 ATP project, all of whom are residents of ARC distressed counties, will work with their fellow community members to learn leadership, production, and conference coordination skills. They will engage with county and college leadership to raise the workforce and tourism capacity of Harlan County.

Guidelines and Activities

- Students will actively engage with at least one community partner-organization or group throughout the semester
- Students will present research at the ATP conference in Washington, D.C., on December 2-3, 2016. All students who attend the conference will be active presenters.
- Students will create a poster for presentation at poster sessions at the Washington, D.C. conference.
- Students will present their research to their primary community partner(s) and will participate in one (or more) of the following options:

- Presentation of research to at least one civic organization or to elected officials within the community, in addition to the primary community partner. This presentation can be combined with the requirement in bullet 4 above.
- Presentation of research at a national conference.
- Participation in a poster session or panel discussion, or delivery of a formal session at the Appalachian Studies Association's Annual Conference in March 2017.

Goals

- Student participatory/active research focusing on an ARC-designated distressed counties.
- Opportunity for SKCTC students, most of whom are Appalachian natives and/or residents, to experience various parts of the region and the work of the Commission in Washington, D.C.
- Opportunity for students to share their research activities in the broader professional community of Appalachian Studies scholars and activists in the Appalachian Studies Association.
- Research addressing the following goals stated in the ARC strategic plan:

Goal 1: Economic Opportunities

Invest in entrepreneurial and business development strategies that strengthen Appalachia's economy.

Goal 2: Ready Workforce

Improve the education, knowledge, skills, and health of residents to work and succeed in Appalachia.

Goal 4: Natural and Cultural Assets

Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by leveraging the Region's natural and cultural heritage assets.

Goal 5: Leadership and Community Capacity

Build the capacity and skills of current and next-generation leaders and organizations to innovate, collaborate, and advance community and economic development.

Project Impact

This project will have significant impact on capacity building through development of student leadership and community sustainability. The project addresses the question, "What changes do you hope will occur in the community as a result of this project?"

Evidence of impact through quantifiable or anecdotal data will include

- The number of attendees at HGCTI
- Evaluation responses by HGCTI attendees
- Production of four Shewbuddy Radio episodes
- Number of students trained as audio/video/podcast producers
- Number of SKCTC classes participating in the Higher Ground Radio process
- Number of students trained by Southeast Television in classes outside its own program
- Development of leadership and civic capacity among the students engaged in the project.
- Research, recommendations, and action that lead to sustainability of Appalachian communities.
- Enhancement of student and community awareness of the work of the ARC at all levels.
- Research partnerships between communities and institutions of higher education in the region.
- Documentation from the partner organization(s) on the impact of the project