



*Young people in action*

# Reviving a bill energizes students' public involvement

by Donna Morgan, Brushy Fork Staff

"Go for it!" That's the advice that a group of six Estill County, Kentucky high school students pass on to young people who want to make a difference in their communities. Amber Reed, Joe Crawford, Jessica Dennis, Jake Reynolds and Brandon Campbell all enthusiastically nodded in agreement with their classmate Kristen Brinegar's observation,

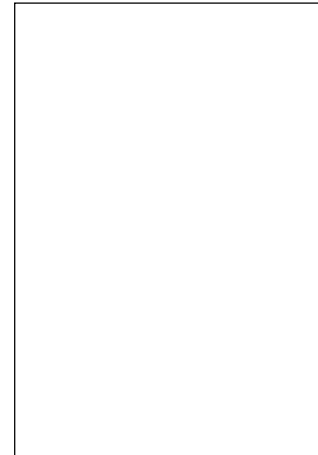
"You may think it won't go anywhere, but it will. We've been on every news station and in so many newspapers. It's such a rare thing that people do take action," she paused and emphasized, "that **young people** do take action, that you get a lot of publicity." Jessica Dennis added, "People sit up and take notice."

The publicity to which Kristen and Jessica refer has been coverage of the students' efforts to promote the passage of a bottle bill for the state of Kentucky. Although the bill was sent to a task force for two years of study, the students still call their efforts successful. "It's made a mark; it's in people's minds now," noted Amber Reed.

## The growth of an idea

The idea for reviving the bottle bill arose from a challenge by Danny Wood, the teacher of an advanced political science class at the Estill County High School. He charged the class to select and research a project that would benefit the whole community. Twenty-five students in the class brainstormed ideas and voted on the best ones. The bottle bill won out because it would benefit the most people and wouldn't cost a lot of money.

The bottle bill also addressed a tangible problem that prevails in rural and urban areas. Roadside ditches, city streets, and open dumps are littered with plastic beverage containers that could be recycled. Other states have effectively instituted deposit and return programs, and the students wanted to see Kentucky undertake a similar initiative.



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## Students revive bottle bill continued from page 1

The proposed bottle bill calls for a deposit of five cents for most containers and ten cents for bottles over twenty ounces. Distributors would pay the deposit to the state and pass on costs to retailers who would then pass on costs to customers. Customers would receive the deposit back when they returned the containers to a recycling facility. Money from unreturned deposits would allow the state to pay for program costs.

The political science class researched the bill and the legislative process of getting it passed, but wasn't ready to let the project drop when the semester ended. The group of six students agreed to carry on with the effort on their own. "Our first goal was to get someone to introduce it. It wouldn't be too hard to say 'We've got this great idea and we want you to introduce it,'" noted Brandon Campbell. "But once we did that, we realized it wasn't going to pass unless it had a whole lot of support. It was up to us to come up with the support."

In their spare time (and most of it, they say), the students contacted legislators, made numerous phone calls, e-mailed other schools, photographed dump sites, researched other recycling programs, and testified in Frankfort. Their publicity efforts paid off.

An article in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* led to a phone call from Kentucky House Majority Leader Greg Stumbo, who had been interested in sponsoring a bottle bill. Finding a legislator to support the controversial bottle bill hadn't been an easy task, so the students happily accepted his sponsorship.

When the students went to raise their voice at legislative hearings, they heard statistics from both the opposition and the supporters of the bill. Brandon recalled, "Everyone wanted statistics—completely black and white figures." The supporters had statistics that showed the bottle bill making money for the state, while the opposition's statistics showed the bill losing money. The students chose to focus not on the statistics but on the problems that the bill would solve. They brought photographs of roadside dumps and

talked about how people would return bottles with the incentive of a deposit.

While the students received support from many sources—the Estill County Fiscal Court, other Kentucky counties, and a few individuals—they were disappointed in the number of people who expressed their support to legislators or who attended hearings in Frankfort. They recalled attendance at the hearings: "The only support outside our county was two Magoffin County students who showed up." Legislators told the students that they had heard only a few constituents express support of the bill, while there were many more against it.

Perhaps the most daunting challenge for the students was facing the opposition from beverage and grocery industries. "There were hundreds of people from [industries] but just a handful of us," recalled the students. Representatives from the industries explained their own recycling efforts and predicted that the bill would hurt business in Kentucky. Company representatives praised the young peoples' concern and supported the ideas behind the bottle bill, but couldn't see the bill as the way to solve waste problems.

The students felt that the companies never understood the goals of the bottle bill. The company representatives focused on land fill problems, noting that newspapers and other products constituted a large part of the waste there. "Our goal is clean up the roadsides not the landfills," said Brandon. "Most of the litter stream beside the road is fast food waste and bottles."

Despite criticisms that the bill didn't provide for what to do with the recyclable plastic after it was collected and that people would drive across state lines to buy bottled products then bring them to Kentucky to redeem the bottles, the young people were adamant that the overall advantages of the legislation would outweigh the problems. Among Kentucky's 120 counties, they said, only 24 have recycling pickup programs. Some people recycle anyway, but even more

***"... we realized [the bill] wasn't going to pass unless it had a whole lot of support. It was up to us to come up with the support."***

people would think twice about throwing a bottle out the car window if they could redeem it for money, the students said.

Although the bill didn't pass during this legislative session, the students are hopeful. For the time being the bottle bill is being considered by a task force. The students have been invited to serve on that task force and plan to do so. Joe Crawford explains, "All or some of us will serve. Hopefully they'll let us just send somebody because there's no way with us being in college (by that time) that one person can be there all the time." The task force will hear testimony and return a report to the legislature by the year 2000.

### **Lessons they learned**

What started out as a class research project has proven an eye-opening political experience for these six students. They've gained insights into the democratic process, including the realization that legislators **do** listen to young people. They've also learned that the process can be discouraging when a legislator turns you down as a sponsor of your bill or when you are struggling against big odds.

Some of the lessons were hard to take. "It let us know how much more effect than citizens that industry can have on the legisla-

ture," commented one of the group members. The students noted that beverage industries had spent \$12 million fighting bottle bills in various states over the past ten years.

The young people have realized the value of calling legislators to voice support of a proposed legislation. "The legislators were saying they had had this many people call who were against the bill but only one call who was for it. We believe that if enough constituents had called, the bill would have been supported."

Group members also wished they had been able to make better connections with existing waste reduction programs. They came to see the value of having such programs collaborate and support one another as they address common goals.

At least one of the bottle bill group was inspired to become a responsive legislator. Meanwhile, the other group members expressed the value of taking part in the democratic process. "Soon so many kids around our age are going to be able to vote," observed Jessica Dennis. That alone is a powerful tool for input, but add these young peoples' willingness to step beyond the voting booth and into the democratic process and the results could be astounding.

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## *Rural outmigration*

# **Will they stay or will they go?**

surveys compiled by Donna Morgan

Rural outmigration is a fact of life for small towns throughout Central Appalachia. As young people mature and make plans for their lives they often look beyond their county and even state borders for success. High poverty and unemployment rates drive good students away from their hometowns. When these students leave, communities lose the investment in their most valuable resource.

*Mountain Promise* surveyed 104 students in Kentucky and West Virginia to see if their plans will lead them away from the rural areas. These students ranged in age from 13 to 18. They have lived in their communities anywhere from three weeks to their entire lives. Most come from families that have been in this region for years, but some are newcomers to the mountains.

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## *Juvenile crime and justice*

# A growing problem calls for prevention

by Paula Isaacs, Brushy Fork Staff

National headlines have been dominated recently by juvenile violent crime: a youth shooting rampage in Jonesboro, Arkansas; a tragic killing spree in Paducah, Kentucky; a young person taking lives in Pearl, Mississippi. These are the acts that come to mind when most people think of juvenile violent crime.

While these crimes have gained national attention, homicide does not constitute the majority of juvenile violent crime. In fact, according to a report released by the Justice Policy Institute in Washington, DC, the national juvenile homicide rate decreased 30 percent between 1994 and 1996.

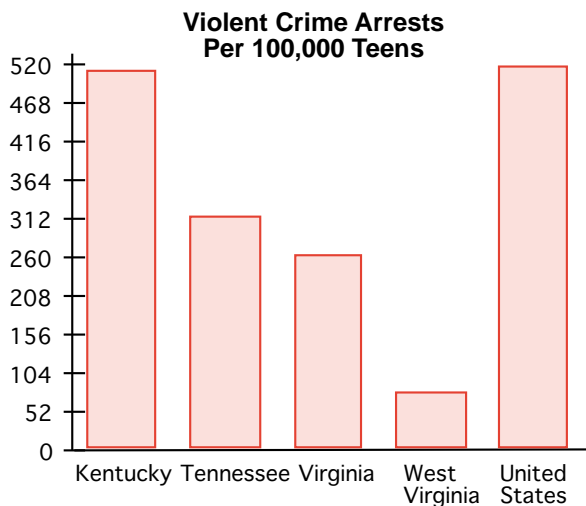
Meanwhile, a report from the Kentucky Youth Advocates documented that from 1985 to 1993 there was a nation-wide increase of 66 percent in the arrest rate for youth who commit violent crimes—crimes more clearly defined as homicide, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault.

In 1985, 123 out of every 100,000 youths in Kentucky were arrested for a violent crime. In 1993 that number rose to 372 out of every 100,000 and by 1994 the number was up to 513—a 317% increase from 1985. A breakdown of these statistics shows that the number of Kentucky youth charged with assault and robbery constituted most of the increase, while the number of youth charged with forcible rape and homicide stayed about the same.

While the violent crime arrest rates in Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia are also on the rise, Kentucky's rate appears to be skyrocketing well beyond that of its neighbors. (See table below.) Why are the rates so different in states with similar histories, cultures and challenges?

Valerie Salley, senior policy analyst for Kentucky Youth Advocates, associates the rise of the violent crime arrest rate in Kentucky with the rising rate of children living in poverty. The poverty rate of Kentucky's children jumped 13 percent between 1985 and 1993 and is still rising. Kentucky's poverty rate is the fifth highest in the nation with more than one in four of the state's children living in poverty. While the child poverty rates in Tennessee, West Virginia and Virginia are high, all of these states have shown a decrease in child poverty between 1985 and 1994 according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *1997 Kids Count Report*.

Salley notes, "Children who are charged with violent crimes are typically those who have been exposed to several risk factors, many of them associated with child poverty. For instance a child living in poverty is more likely to receive poor early childhood care, live in substandard housing, or lack the support and supervision of at least one parent.



Statistics show differences among the juvenile violent crime arrest rates among Central Appalachian states.

Data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Web site: <http://www.aecf.org/>.

Each of these factors can lead to low self-esteem, poor school performance and increased delinquency.”

In addition to poverty and its negative effects on children, Salley points out the link between violence in the home and juvenile violent crime. A child who experiences abuse or witnesses spousal or family abuse is at risk for dealing with problems by becoming violent.

Another factor contributing to the worsening of the juvenile crime rate is that Kentucky has been operating its juvenile justice programs on inadequate resources. Historically, Kentucky has been one of very few states out-of-compliance with the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, which requires states to follow certain regulations to receive extra funding for juvenile crime issues. According to Salley, these federal funds could have been used for treatment and prevention programs and to improve conditions in juvenile detention centers.

### **Changes in juvenile legislation**

In the past juvenile justice programs have been run on a county-to-county basis through the Cabinet for Human Resources. But the way juvenile justice systems are run in Kentucky is changing. In 1996, Governor Paul Patton created a new Department of Juvenile Justice to handle growing youth crime issues under the direction of Commissioner Ralph Kelly. And during this year’s General Assembly, the Governor’s Crime Bill was passed into law.

As part of the Crime Bill, Kentucky legislators focused new attention on juvenile justice issues, increasing the amount of state funding for programs and agreeing to comply with federal regulations. To ensure compliance with these regulations (such requirements as housing juveniles separately from adult offenders), the juvenile justice system will be run at the state level rather than by individual counties. So in the biennium

Kentucky will have money for juvenile justice not only from the state but also from the federal government.

The state budget includes funding for new detention centers to be built across the state and run by the state. New facilities will also include a boot camp to be used as a treatment alternative. Salley notes, “If we want to help young people avoid living under the supervision of the justice system, and to go on to lead productive lives, then we must make every effort to rehabilitate early before their criminal activity escalates.”

She noted that, for our juvenile justice system to be effective, we must keep in mind that the maturity levels between young people and adults are different, and we must deal with juveniles on that basis. It appears that the Department of Juvenile Justice is adopting an approach which reflects this fact, and will focus on “graduated sanctions,” which increase the juvenile’s treatment or punishment to fit the offense committed.

The Crime Bill also addresses how youth could be sentenced. Current law states that a youth may be tried as an adult under two conditions: 1) if that person is 14 years or older and commits a class A or class B felony; or 2) if that person is 16 years or older and commits a serious crime and has a prior felony conviction. Under current law, a young person shall be tried as an adult if he or she is at least fourteen years old and commits a felony in which a firearm is used.

Under new law, a judge may consider whether a young person committed a crime in furtherance of “criminal gang activity”. If such a determination is made, a juvenile’s penalty may be increased by adding up to three years to his or her sentence.

### **Prevention programs**

Of course, the ideal situation is to keep young people from committing crimes. Prevention programs are part of the Governor’s budget and will be developed by regional

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## Teen pregnancy

# Generations at risk in our communities

by Donna Morgan, Brushy Fork Staff

Statistics indicate that the number of teen pregnancies in this nation is dropping. The numbers spread out across the paper in neat columns. It's hard to remember sometimes that each number represents peoples' lives that don't fall into place so neatly. For those who are most involved with the teen pregnancy issue, these numbers come to life daily.

Despite recent drops, the U.S. teenage pregnancy rate remains high. The Alan Guttmacher Institute for Reproductive Health Research estimates that four in 10 teenagers (between 15-19) will become pregnant at some time before they reach age 20. Current data indicate that 85% of teen pregnancies are unintended and that 79% of teen pregnancies occur outside of marriage.

The problems associated with teen births are evident throughout our communities. Teenage childbearing diminishes opportuni-

ties for both the child and the mother.

"Many of these kids are falling through the cracks," notes Linda Rose, who counsels pregnant teens in the Parent Resource Program at the Gateway District Health Department in West Liberty, Kentucky.

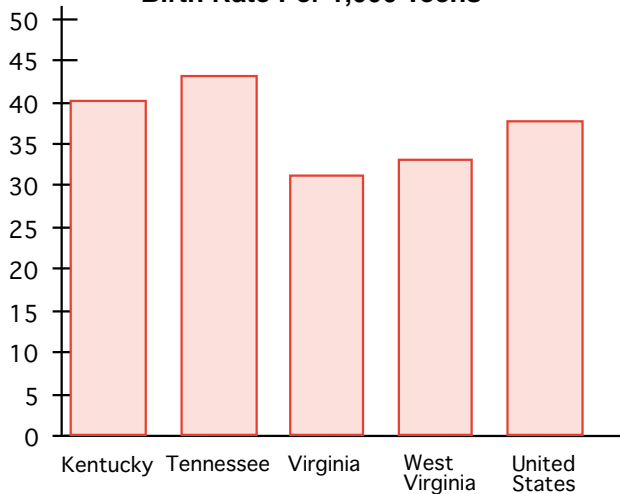
"Education is a real problem," says Linda. "It's hard for the girls to stay in school. With prenatal and WIC appointments, and general sickness that can come with pregnancy, these girls can't keep their attendance up. They quit because they can't meet the requirements." Of the 69 girls on her caseload, nine are in high school, 15 are getting a GED, four are working and four are in college. Over half are not going to school, not working on a GED and not employed. "The number of girls not working is increasing because employers won't hire without a GED," says Linda.

According to Linda quitting school leads to a multitude of hurdles in addition to the lack of an education. "State law requires that minors not enrolled in school lose their driver's license, so these girls have no transportation," Linda explains. Lack of transportation means the teens can't always get to health care providers' offices, nor could they get to work if they were able to obtain employment. Although the state allows young people to regain the driver's license in hardship cases, the process is not always easy.

While the young mothers in Linda's care are eligible for state assisted health care during their pregnancies, two months after the birth of the baby, most are removed from state medical assistance. Some of the girls continue to receive housing and food stamp assistance. "Many of them don't realize that, eventually, there's not going to be any welfare," Linda states.

The prospects for the future of these mothers and their children can look grim. The *Kids Count Study* states: "Eight to twelve

Birth Rate Per 1,000 Teens



Statistics show that the teen pregnancy rate in Central Appalachian states is fairly close to the national average.

Data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Web site: <http://www.aecf.org/>.

years after birth, a child born to an unmarried, teenage, high school dropout is 10 times as likely to be living in poverty as a child born to a mother with none of these three characteristics. . . . Research shows that children born to teenage single mothers are more likely to drop out of school, to give birth out of wedlock, to divorce or separate, and to be dependent on welfare.”

In most of Linda’s cases, the fathers of the children do not take an active role. National statistics show that 51% of the fathers of children born to teens are in their twenties. The Annie E. Casey Foundation notes in their *Summary and Findings from the 1997 Kids Count Study* that teenage childbearing prevention programs that focus solely on teenagers may be missing an important

segment of the population involved in this problem. The Foundation also surmises that growing evidence shows that births experienced by many young women may be the result of involuntary sex.

Although no one has a clear definition of what will solve teen pregnancy problems, research has identified four factors that contribute to teenage childbearing. According to the Casey Foundation’s study, teens most likely to have a child are those: 1) from economically disadvantaged families and communities; 2) who are not doing well in school and have low aspirations for their own educational achievement; 3) from dysfunctional families; and 4) with substance abuse and behavioral problems.

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## Resource programs for teen sexuality issues

POSTPONING SEXUAL INVOLVEMENT [PSI] is a successful sexuality education curriculum that teaches both abstinence and contraceptive techniques. Older teen leaders assist younger teens in developing and practicing skills that enable them to postpone sexual activity. For more information, contact Marion Howard at Grady Memorial Hospital, 80 Butler Street, SE, PO Box 26158, Atlanta, GA 30335; (404) 616-3513.

HiTOPS is a sexuality education program that gives teenagers comprehensive training in human sexuality and leadership skills. After training, the teens facilitate workshops and serve as a resource for their peers. For more information, contact Bonnie Parker, RN, Director, HiTOPS, 21 Wiggins Street, Princeton, NJ 08540; (609) 685-5155.

WISE GUYS is a flexible eight-to-ten week program for 10-19 year-old males. The program focuses on sexual responsibility, family communication and positive life options. The curriculum covers: Self-Esteem, Values, Communication, Sexuality, Goal Setting, Responsible Decision Making, and Parenthood. For more information, contact Advocates for Youth, 1025 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 347-5700.

May is NATIONAL TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION MONTH. Advocates for Youth offers a guidebook to help communities plan public awareness activities. The manual contains: sample proclamations, editorials, public service announcements, flyers and pamphlets, and forms to engage participation. For more information, contact Advocates for Youth at the address above.

October is LET’S TALK MONTH. The Advocates for Youth also offers a guidebook for planning events and programs to provide youth accurate and healthy information about sexuality. For more information, contact Advocates for Youth at the address above.

## Stay or go . . . continued from page 3

The students who were given this survey were participants in the East Kentucky Leadership Network's Youth Leadership Program and in West Virginia's Central State Middle School Teen Institute, so these young people have been active and aware of problems in their communities. We are not sure how this affected the number of students who choose to stay or leave.

Of the survey respondents, 58% plan to leave their home communities; 30% plan to stay and 12% were undecided. Most of the students surveyed hoped to go to college. They all expressed dreams and career plans. But their ideas of a future in their communities ranged from skepticism to hopeful planning.

### Why do young people leave

The main reason given for leaving communities was lack of employment opportunities. The students defined a wide range of career goals—architect, beautician, carpenter, computer programmer, doctor, English teacher, entrepreneur, forester, homemaker, lawyer, mechanic, musician, nurse, politician, police officer, store clerk, social worker, timber cutter, truck driver and welder were among the choices. Most of these young people felt their communities offered no opportunity for their careers.

One student commented: "The people are nice, but there aren't many jobs around here. And if there are, they don't pay the greatest. I plan to make something out of myself and not live off a welfare check." Another respondent noted his opinion of the jobs in his county: "The biggest place to work [in the county] is no place for me!"

Many of the young people who plan to leave express their decision not as a desire but as a necessity. In fact, they seem to regret having to leave. "The main reason I do not want to stay is because none of my job interests are found in my community," wrote one respondent. "Other than that, I would love to stay. . . because it has so little violence and is a really beautiful place." Several young

people noted that while they will spend their working life outside their county, they plan to return upon retirement.

In addition to jobs, a few young people mentioned the lack of recreational activities as a factor in their decision to leave. Also mentioned was the need to acquire higher education and the fact that many young people who go away to college never return to their home communities. For the most part, the young people who were planning to leave expect their classmates to do the same.

"None of us feel that we will get a proper opportunity to start a prosperous life of our own here," wrote one student. This sense of a lack of opportunity recurs throughout the comments of those students who are leaving: "Some are planning to stay and work at small jobs, while others (like myself) feel they can do more in life," said one student. Another commented, "Some will stay and some will go. Some of my classmates want to go somewhere and **be somebody.**"

### What are communities losing

This attitude of not "being somebody" in the home community was evident when students who plan to leave were asked what the community would lose by their withdrawal. Several of the students who indicated plans to leave left this question blank, a possible indicator that they don't feel the community will lose anything. A couple of others said as much. "I could have offered very little compared to others in the community. . ." stated one youth. A second student noted, "I don't think the community will lose anything when I leave."

But other responses held an account of what communities lose when their young people leave: "a good leader with good personal qualities; an intelligent young man who sets his goals high; ideas; leadership skills; one heck of a go-getter; an abundance of dreams; someone who helps others; a very outgoing and determined person; someone willing to work; a good leader with ambitions for those around me; diversity; a different view; a

representative of minority.” Perhaps the most complex one-word definition of what a community loses was stated as “ME.”

### **What can communities do**

As they make these demands on their communities, do young people have ideas on how the communities can meet these demands? Of course they do. The young people in our survey made several suggestions, mostly focusing on economic and job development.

“More jobs and better money would encourage me,” noted one young person. “It’s not that I dislike it here, I just don’t see a future.” The vision for a desired future was further defined by other students: “more factories, medical centers and other work for the people; a cleaner and better environment for everyone; more preservation of cultures; more things to do.”

Students suggested concrete ideas such as programs and people who talk to young people about what their community has to offer and why they should stay or a scholarship program for children who plan to return to the community. Several of them wanted a more positive emphasis on the heritage of the community—making it something for the young people to be proud of.

A student wrote: “Pay more attention to the potential we have in our region. Rather than scorn for the things we lack, as well as the negative aspects of our counties, more emphasis should be placed on encouraging the growing, positive aspects. . . .”

### **Those who plan to stay**

What makes some young people resist the urge to move on to what is usually touted as bigger and better? Most of the students who plan to stay in their home communities expressed a strong connection to the community. Usually this connection centered around family and heritage.

One student wrote: “After college, I have hopes of maintaining a home in this region because the only home I have ever know is

the hills of Appalachia and I would like to share this experience with my future children.” This connection to home and community leads to a sense of hope. The student continues, “Instead of moving from here due to the lack of opportunities, I plan to remain here and try to increase the opportunities for us. . . .” In this response lies a sense of community, evident in the use of the inclusive “us”.

Another student expressed the same connection with home and seems to have chosen a career that has a niche in the home community. “I love the closeness we have in my community. Everyone knows everyone else. . . . I do feel that career opportunities are limited here, but as a teacher I won’t have a problem finding a job.”

Other students noted needs in the community and expressed a desire to address such issues as health care, community development, and legal problems. Some of these young people felt challenged to meet the needs they see at home. One student who plans to stay expressed it thus: “Just as in any other small towns, you have two main types of people: those who are afraid of the big world and stay in their own town, and those who are so sick of no opportunities that they run, instead of facing the problem. . . . I am a little of both. . . .”

Among those young people who were undecided was a respondent who expressed the importance of the community in developing peoples’ lives. “For a while, I always said that I would leave here when I got older. The older I get the more I grow to love and appreciate my rural community. Many of the values I consider very important to me have been instilled in me through my community. . . .”

The connection young people feel with their community seems to play a major role in the hope they have for their home. Perhaps as we work to develop our communities we should also attend to forging this connection with our youth.

## Juvenile justice

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councils. Valerie Salley expressed the essential need to provide youth with positive ways of directing their energy.

The General Assembly has authorized \$650,000 for funding pilot prevention programs in five counties with the highest juvenile arrest rate. This grant money might be used to fund projects such as Teen Court. Salley explains, "In Teen Courts, the teens serve as jury members in hearings for nonviolent offenses that are allegedly committed by juveniles. Basically, the kids are getting a jury of their peers." Getting the youth involved in the justice system brings to life the process offenders must face. "It forces kids to think about issues, to face the reality of actions and consequences."

Other prevention activities Salley suggests include positive after school programs and parental involvement initiatives. "One of the most effective ways of preventing juvenile delinquency. . . is for parents to take interest in and responsibility for their kids."

Eventually, the Department of Juvenile Justice would like to expand prevention programs statewide, an effort which would cost \$2.5 million. This would provide counties \$50,000 to \$100,000 to start pilot projects such as teen courts, therapeutic foster homes and after school programs.

While Valerie Salley applauds Kentucky's legislators for their focus on juvenile issues, she also regrets that action has come too late for some children. "We have waited and let children grow up in homes where they don't feel safe and nurtured, in neighborhoods where they don't feel valuable, and in a society that doesn't take an interest in meeting their needs. With the juvenile violent crime arrest rate rising, we are seeing the results of our failure, as adults, to invest in children. When it comes to caring for our children, an ounce of prevention really is worth more than a pound of cure."

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## Teen pregnancy

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Despite the fact that the young mothers face many obstacles, Linda speaks proudly of how they care for their children. "As a whole the girls take good care of their babies. They love them and feed them, even if they are poor."

### Assisting teen mothers

According to Linda, one of the most important ways communities can assist teen mothers is by providing transportation for school or GED classes and medical care. She recalls a particular case to illustrate her point: "Two kids got married and were living up a hollow. They had no drivers' licenses, so he drove a four wheeler about five miles a day to get a ride to his job outside the county." Safe transportation would have addressed an important need for the young couple.

Linda also notes a need for parenting classes, particularly noting a role for local institutions. In West Liberty, a satellite campus of Morehead State University helped the health department co-sponsor a Girls' Day Out. The teen mothers were provided child care and lunch and attended sessions on dressing for success, makeup application and community

resources. They were able to share their experiences with other teen mothers and spend an afternoon building relationships.

Other programs in the community offer assistance to teen and other new at-risk mothers. Staff of the Healthy Beginnings Program make weekly home visits to teach parenting skills and reduce incidents of child abuse. The First Step Program assists parents with identifying and addressing child development problems.

Linda also stresses the need to make information and contraceptives available to young people through the schools and other accessible places. "I had a really hard time giving out condoms at the health department but after seeing problems with STD's, I saw the need. We need to keep these young people alive and healthy until they grow up and have a chance to be responsible."

Linda stresses the important role that peers play in addressing teen sexuality issues. She advises young people to support one another in saying no to early sexual activity. "Make it like Alcoholics Anonymous. If you think you're going to have sex, call a friend and talk to them about it. Allow for open, honest discussion. Remember peer pressure can go both ways."

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## *Speak up!*

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### Leadership arises from caring about issues

by Perrin de Jong, Berea College Student and Brushy Fork Associate

When I first came to Berea College, I knew that I was concerned about several major problems which human society is facing, but at the same time I was relatively uneducated about world issues and student activism. I spent my days as a silent and inactive member of my community.

Today, I'm a Junior at Berea and I work at Students For Appalachia (a community service organization) where I find myself sitting between so many opportunities for involvement in constructive community organizing projects that I can't seem to find time to focus on half of them. In a typical week, I may: organize and lead crews of volunteers in environmental service projects; arrange for speakers to come on campus and address pressing environmental issues; participate in community and committee meetings to help shape the environmental policies of my school; communicate with student activists state-wide to coordinate projects; and volunteer with other local organizations.

What I do—and what I have done—are not unique in the span of history. Students have always been at the forefront of sociopolitical and other progressive movements. They have traditionally served as the voice of conscience for many different cultures whose inhabitants have felt too occupied with their own lives to speak up about (and therefore change) the larger society. But unique or not, my transition from dormancy to activism was fueled by my identifying a lack of adequate local leadership to handle the challenges confronting my community. Robert Burkhardt was said that “leadership is the inability to sit back and watch the world go to hell”. Looking back over my own story, I realize how well this applies to my journey of discovering my leadership potential.

I have never had any great desire to be acknowledged as a “leader”. I don't relish the thought of being recognized by most people who see me in my community. I only started making my voice heard on issues I cared about because I really did care and I realized that no one else was going to speak up. I never had designs of becoming a locally recognized leader and activist when I wrote those first few letters and organized those first few projects.

As I filled the leadership gap in my community project by project, people quickly came to recognize me as a local leader on environmental and social justice issues. I was reluctant to allow such an image to be created about me. I valued my personal space. At the same time I realized that there was a real need for concerned voices to be heard, and if I could serve as a catalyst for that process by allowing others to call me a “leader”, then so be it.

My experiences as a leader in this community have been rewarding. I have learned much about myself and my world. The experiences have not always been easy. Organizing and motivating others can be lonely, draining work, but the inspiration that comes from the most fulfilling moments in the field always provides more than enough energy to sustain me through dry periods. What really makes me feel alive and motivated is to bring people together to work towards a world of which they can be proud. Although I've had doubts about the work I do and how I do it, seeing the satisfaction in a volunteer's eyes after a successful event is all I need to continue through the most tedious work. I hope I never stop!

With that said, I guess the most important thing for me to do is to ask you a few questions, or more accurately to encourage you to ask *yourself* a few questions:

- What problems am I aware of in my community?
- Is the leadership in my community (wherever that might be) adequate and motivated to handle these pressing issues?
- What am I passionate about?
- What can be done to make the situation better; where can I get more information about this issue and the people who are already working on it?
- Who do I know who cares about this issue who I could work with/ how can I find people who care about this and who would want to help?

Looking for answers to these questions? SEAC is a great student-run resource on community organizing. Write to SEAC National Office, PO Box 31909, Philadelphia, PA 19104 to request information.

# Talent show has success; more can be done

by Michael Taylor, columnist for the *Point Pleasant Register*

*On January 29, 1998, Leadership Mason County from West Virginia held a talent show to raise money for recycling awareness. The show was a huge success with over \$1400.00 raised. But in addition to the money, the show raised pride in the community as pointed out by local newspaper columnist Michael Taylor.*

All I hear from people in Mason County is that there is never anything to do. People always complain about not being able to do this or not being able to do that. Based on what I saw Thursday night at the State Theater in Point Pleasant, people in Mason County are a bunch of liars.

I never dreamed that there would be as much local talent as there appears to be in the county. I don't want to make too big of a thing out of this, but I was simply amazed at the number of talented singers, speakers, bands and performers there were at the Mason County Talent Show.

The talent show was sponsored by the Leadership Showcase Mason County and The Solid Waste Authority. Besides showcasing local talent, the group also hoped to raise money for The Solid Waste Authority, raise awareness about recycling and bring people down to Main Street and the State Theater. The group accomplished all of its goals in strong fashion.

I'll be honest with you. I went down expecting to see a couple of acts that would be pretty good and then a bunch of other performers who would need some more practice. What I got was completely different. More than 50 people performed during the four-hour plus show and I can't think of one act that wasn't entertaining. I think the packed house at the State was also surprised.

For me personally, I was impressed with the group "Right of Way." I also enjoyed Jessica Morse and Amy Lynch's after dinner speech, Matt Thompson's humorous interpretation and Noah Absten's humorous interpretation.

Not to be outdone, though, was the singing of Maura Clark, Billie Morgan and Mandy Wassell. I also enjoyed Bryan Patterson's rock/acoustic songs.

One group received a standing ovation and perhaps the loudest applause of the evening. The group of Noah, Billy, Inez and Tina Smith formed with Mindy Neal to sing two rap songs that had a

Christian flavor to them. The group had the crowd clapping and singing along. They were an obvious hit with everyone.

What was more important was that everyone had a good attitude. No one took any performance too seriously. People just wanted to enjoy themselves. Even the recycling facts that were given between each act were sometimes funny and kept with the overall idea of the evening. Many of the acts performed original material which was also impressive.

The Mason County Talent Show proves again that people will come out and support local people doing just about anything worthwhile. The only bad part was that many people couldn't sit through the entire show and left before it was over. I heard many people on the Leadership Showcase board say that if they have another talent show, they would split it up into two days or be a little more critical in the number of performances.

It is obvious to me, and should be obvious to everyone else that was there Thursday night, that Mason County needs more events like this. There are so many different things that could be done well with just a little bit of work and planning.

"Look out Hollywood because Mason County has some talent of its own," Mary Beth Carlisle, Leadership Showcase Mason County member, said. Well, Mrs. Carlisle, we're not Hollywood yet but the point is well taken.

Yes Virginia, Mason County has talent. A lot of talent in a wide array of areas and interests. To all those who braved the stage and got up and did something—way to go! For those who plucked down the three bucks to get in—way to go!

So you see, there are dozens of talented people around here who may say that there is never anything to do, but secretly they are honing their skills for just the right time.

Who says there isn't anything to do in Mason County?

reprinted with permission from the *Point Pleasant Register*, February 4, 1998

## Seedling Grants awarded

Three county teams have recently received Seedling Grants through the Leadership Development Program. All three recipients are from the 1997 program cycle.

Gilmer Countians for Community Development in West Virginia received a \$1000 grant to help fund materials for county welcome signs. The signs will be erected at six major highway points of entry into the county.

Hands Across the River for Tomorrow (HART) from Claiborne County, Tennessee, will use a \$250 grant to print and distribute a resource guide for volunteers seeking agencies that can use their time and energy.

Positive Revitalization in Developing Elliott (Kentucky) was awarded a \$1000 grant to assist with the printing and distribution of a county brochure.

## Counties chosen for '98 LDP

Brushy Fork staff are beginning the recruitment process for county teams in the 1998 cycle of the Brushy Fork Leadership Development Program.

Participants from Jackson and Lewis Counties in West Virginia and from Johnson County, Kentucky, will attend their opening workshop in Berea from September 10-12. Joining these three teams will be a Berea College group.

*Mountain Promise* readers who know residents of these counties that may be interested in the program are encouraged to recommend these individuals to Brushy Fork staff.

The 1998 cycle will close with a two-day workshop from April 9-10, 1999.

## West Virginia youth program run by high schoolers

Young people in central West Virginia are presented the opportunity to both share and learn from one another's experiences through the Central State Middle School Teen Institute. High school students from five rural counties will design and run workshop sessions in an intensive one-day workshop for middle school students.

The high school youth will carry out the schedule of the day, select meals, present sessions and design t-shirts for the program. Three to five high school students from each of the counties serve on a steering committee that makes decisions about the program.

The Teen Institute workshop is planned for the end of April. Topics that have been chosen will center around tobacco, alcohol and drugs, nutrition, sexuality, violence, physical activity, stress reduction, responsibility and other youth issues. Middle school participants will carry out a prevention activity for their school or community based on the workshop.

Students are selected for the program through self nomination and recommendation from school staff. Criteria for selection include: leadership ability, personal risk factors and a willingness to carry out a prevention activity in their school or community. For more information, contact Patrick Leggett at Gilmer County High School, (304) 462-7960.

### Next issue to focus on diversity in Appalachia

*Mountain Promise*, the newsletter of the Brushy Fork Institute, is published quarterly. Our next issue will examine cultural diversity in Appalachia. We encourage readers to submit articles, reports, photos, line art or story suggestions. If you have an article or a story idea, contact:

*Mountain Promise*, attention Donna Morgan  
Brushy Fork Institute  
CPO 35, Berea College  
Berea, KY 40404

Phone: (606) 986-9341 extension 6838  
Fax: (606) 986-5510  
e-mail: Donna\_Morgan@berea.edu

## *SLIPping into leadership*

# Eastern Kentucky program targets uninvolved youth

*Leader: anyone who identifies a problem and works to correct it.*

by Peggy Pollard

This is the working definition around which Forward in the Fifth has developed its Student Leadership Initiative Program (SLIP). SLIP was developed initially to meet a need expressed by Forward in the Fifth affiliates for a leadership program for teens in their counties.

Based on Brushy Fork's Leadership Development Program, SLIP is designed to move eighth grade students of all academic abilities to action. Students first participate in icebreakers and team building activities to help them improve their people skills and bring them together as a group. Each team then examines its community by discussing the good and bad aspects. They choose a community problem to address and develop an action plan. The students provide a service project to their communities while building their leadership skills and confidence.

Students that participate in the program benefit in several ways. The participants learn that through planning, commitment and action, they can change

their world. They are exposed to peers from different walks of life and begin to understand what it takes to work with them. Ultimately, they become active and engaged members of their own communities.

Forward in the Fifth coordinators of SLIP, Andy Beichler and Donna Alexander emphasize the importance of working with eighth grade students. Research indicates that students who have not become involved in extracurricular activities by the time they are in the eighth grade are at greater risk of dropping out of school. For some students, SLIP has been the first step in becoming involved in other activities, such as track and basketball.

The staff of Forward in the Fifth encourage readers who are interested in the SLIP curriculum to contact them. They can advise provide advice on recruiting, logistics and implementation of the program. For more information, call Andy Beichler or Donna Alexander at Forward in the Fifth, (606) 986-3696.

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## Girl Scouting in the School Day provides growth for rural girls

Beth really wanted to be a Girl Scout, but she did not have a ride to meetings and no one in her area was able to volunteer time as a leader. Beth still has the opportunity to become a Girl Scout, though. Since many girls in Appalachia have the same problem as Beth, Girl Scouts-Wilderness Road Council developed Girl Scouting In The School Day (GSSD).

Flexibility allows GSSD to meet unique needs. For example, if a school has many children who are left at home alone, they may do a program that teaches girls what to do without adult supervision. Programs may be used as part of the classroom curriculum, as a recess or counseling activity, or as a club period meeting.

Traditional Girl Scout programs are available to GSSD participants. Girls earn the badges by doing hands-on activities. Contemporary issues include

activities timely for today's young women on health and fitness, child abuse, diversity,

literacy and drug abuse. Other programs available include first aid, baby-sitting and conflict resolution.

Girl Scouting In The School Day has 8 program workbooks designed especially for the classroom. Topics include careers, leadership, citizenship, goal setting, self-esteem, money management and emergency preparation.

For more information on Girl Scouting in the School Day, contact the Wilderness Road Council at 2277 Executive Drive, Lexington, KY 40505-4807.





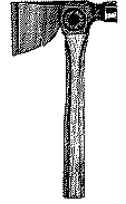
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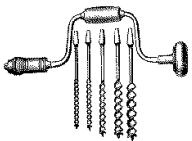
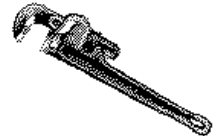
### Listening Skills For Parents\*

\*(and anyone else who has to communicate with other people)

For many, the most difficult aspect of communicating well is the ability to listen. Often rather than just listening we are making our judgements and thinking about how to respond. Anyone who knows his or her words will be listened to, respected and understood sees communication as a positive exchange. Below are some pointers to communicate that you value the person to whom you are listening.



- ✓ **Do** allow children to express themselves without interruptions.
- ✓ **Do** try to hear what your child is saying. Do not filter or edit the child's words to fit your expectations.
- ✗ **Don't** judge your child. Let the child have an opportunity to express his or her own point of view.
- ✓ **Do** put yourself in the child's shoes. Respond in a manner that lets the child know you understand what is being said (even if you disagree).
- ✗ **Don't** jump to conclusions. Let your child explain what happened before a judgment is made.
- ✓ **Do** repeat what the child is saying to show your understanding. Use a statement that demonstrates your appreciation of what the child has said. For example, if the child explains that he is anxious over an upcoming sports event, you can say, "*I know you're feeling nervous about what can happen.*"
- ✗ **Don't** finish your child's sentences for him or her. Wait for the child to finish before starting your response.
- ✓ **Do** affirm the child's feelings (as in the example above) rather than discounting them. Don't say, "*You're not nervous, you're a little excited.*" Respect your child's words and ability to know how he or she feels.



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*from the calendar*

**Appalachian Family Folk Week**

**June 7-13**

**Hindman, Kentucky**

The Appalachian Family Folk Week is designed for individuals and families who want to share in a week of traditional Appalachian music, dance, crafts, storytelling and instrument playing. For more information, contact the Hindman Settlement School, Forks of Troublesome Creek, Hindman, KY 41822; or call (606) 785-5475.

**Central Appalachian Ecological Integrity Conference June 26-28 Elkins, West Virginia**

The Central Appalachian Ecological Integrity Conference is hosted by the Appalachian Restoration Campaign and will be held at Davis and Elkins College in Elkins, WV. Sessions will focus on soil conservation, forest management, urban sprawl and other topics. For more information, contact the Appalachian Restoration Campaign, PO Box 5541, Athens, OH 45701; (740) 592-3968; arc@frognet.net.

**Appalachian Writers Workshop**

**July 26-31**

**Hindman, Kentucky**

This 21st annual session of the Appalachian Writers' Workshop focuses on writers and writings from the Appalachian region. Sessions on poetry, short story, novel, nonfiction and children's books will be presented. This year's staff includes James Still, Lee Smith, Gurney Norman, George Ella Lyon and Ed McClanahan and other regional writers. For more information, contact the Hindman Settlement School, Forks of Troublesome Creek, Hindman, KY 41822; or call (606) 785-5475.

**Meeting the Challenge of Change: Brushy Fork's Tenth Anniversary Celebration  
November 6-7, 1998 Berea, Kentucky**

Don't miss this celebration of ten years of leadership development in Central Appalachia! The agenda for the two-day event will include a reunion of Brushy Fork Associates, time to look at the past and the future of Brushy Fork and a special appearance by Vaughn Grisham, sociologist from the University of Mississippi who has done extensive study in community development. Watch for additional information in the next newsletter and in upcoming special mailings!

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