



Connecting Campus and Community

Connector

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Students for Appalachia and People Who Care celebrate 40th



Former and current students represent Students for Appalachia and People Who Care at the recent Alumni Awards Reception.

By **MEGAN NASEMAN**

"We are here tonight celebrating ordinary people who have done extraordinary things with their lives." Bill Laramee set the tone of the alumni awards reception on Friday, November 8, 2008. After the individual outstanding alumni awards, a Legacy of Service Award was presented to Students for Appalachia (SFA) and People Who Care (PWC), recognizing their 40th anniversary. The beautiful plaque, which will be displayed in the CELTS office, has engraved, "Since 1968 Students for Appalachia and People Who Care, two of Berea College's oldest community service programs, have set the tone for exemplary student-led service and community partnership at Berea. This award is given in honor of the legacy of those who have served in the past, the commitment of those serving today, and the

future of those who will serve, lead and learn in the years to come."

The characters of that legacy were on hand to share their stories. To help those alumni identify each other CELTS provided small blue ribbons. Wearing those ribbons were alumni who spanned the 40 years of SFA and PWC as well as current CELTS students. The atmosphere was a bit like a family reunion, as alumni were eager to catch up with old friends as well as meet current CELTS students. Accounts of adventures in service united all who shared in the conversations.

Dr. Meta Mendel-Reyes, the current CELTS Director, spoke about what an honor it has been to play a role in this legacy. "Everything we do at CELTS traces back to SFA and PWC." Ruth Davis, '72, Health

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ALUMNI NEWS

Courtney Hamm, '04, is currently living in San Francisco, California, and volunteering as a core organizer of the Bay Area Childcare Collective, as well as applying to get her Masters in Social Work at Tulane University for the fall of 2009. She is currently working as a Grants Specialist and Legal Assistant at T.S. Wrobel & Associates. Courtney says she is also enjoying the two seasons of San Francisco, foggy or clear! Good luck with graduate school, Courtney!

Kristin Falgout Carter, '05, writes that she is teaching first grade in Athens, Georgia and loves it! She also got married last December and is expecting her first child (a boy!) in April. Kristin says to make it quick and simple, she's been up to work and family and wouldn't have it any other way! Congratulations, Kristin!

Leah Devine, '06, is staying busy teaching Spanish at East Bank Middle School outside of Charleston, West Virginia. She is also staying politically active and connected through environmental activism and social justice work. Last fall she helped start the Charleston Area Youth Environmental Network. They work with SEAC and participate in networks and campaigns similar to HEAL.

Summer 2008 Energy and Empowerment Community-Based Research Projects

The work that began with the October 2007 Community-Based Research (CBR) workshop and the February 2008 Energy and Empowerment (E&E) gathering continues to flourish. Not only is the momentum of energy work in the Berea community growing, but the first round of CBR projects began during the summer of 2008. The projects were funded by the Learn and Serve America CBR Innovation grant. All of the projects were carried out by students, community-partners, and faculty.

Beth Bismeyer, a Berea College senior, worked as an intern at Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC) to develop and administer an energy survey for the residents of Madison County. Meta Mendel-Reyes was the faculty sponsor. The survey looked at the impact of rising electricity costs, conservation efforts, and energy literacy. Grant money was used to purchase compact florescent bulbs to give to survey participants. They found that most participants were impacted by rising energy costs, are interested in learning more ways to save energy, and are unaware that coal provides the majority of electricity in Kentucky. As a result, the KFTC energy work team, in collaboration with the Energy and Empowerment planning committee, is working to connect survey participants with groups seeking to disseminate energy conservation information.

Another CBR project was the partnership of HomeGrown HideAways, Berea students Erin Finsel and Phil Hawn, and faculty sponsor Richard Olson. They started by researching building codes in Madison County. Once building permits were attained, they participated in building the first code-approved Earthbag home in the state of Kentucky as well as a code-approved Strawbale and Cob art studio. They spent many hot Saturdays elbow-deep (and in some cases knee-deep) in the ingredients of natural buildings: straw, mud, clay, and sand. During these public workshops they taught participants natural building skills and shared information about their work with the codes officials.

This semester more E&E CBR projects are underway! If you have an idea for a project please contact Ashley Cochrane or Megan Naseman.



Kentuckians for the Commonwealth interns Ian McHugh and Beth Bismeyer survey Madison County residents about energy.

SFA/PWC celebrate 40th Anniversary

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Education Director for the Madison County Health Department—who also contributed an article in this newsletter—accepted the award along with current PWC Program Manager, Jessica Price, on behalf of all who have served through Berea College.

Jessica was honored to accept the award. Moreover, she expressed how she was inspired by interacting with PWC alumni. “They told me such amazing stories and events they used to be involved in and the lives that they touched. It is strange to think that one day I might be in their position and would have accomplished the things they have.”

One truth that has remained constant throughout the years was articulated by Ruth Davis, “you go off thinking you have so much to give, but you come back receiving so much more.” In celebration of the last 40 years, this issue of *The Connector* is dedicated to that legacy of giving and receiving, leading and learning through service.

CELS hosts Service-Learning Workshop

On Wednesday October 29, community partners, faculty, staff and students gathered for a two-part service-learning workshop. Before lunch, participants learned about a newly formed Public Health Research Network, sponsored by the Madison County Health Department, as part of the Kentucky Public Health Research Network. During and after lunch, participants explored the process of designing service-learning projects, with three goals in mind: to produce valuable results for community organizations, to facilitate significant learning for students, and to make sure that no one gets worn out in the process! Participants drew on their own experiences and a small group planning activity to share best practice tips with each other. If you have ideas for future service-learning workshops topics, please contact Ashley Cochrane.

Program Spotlight: First Book

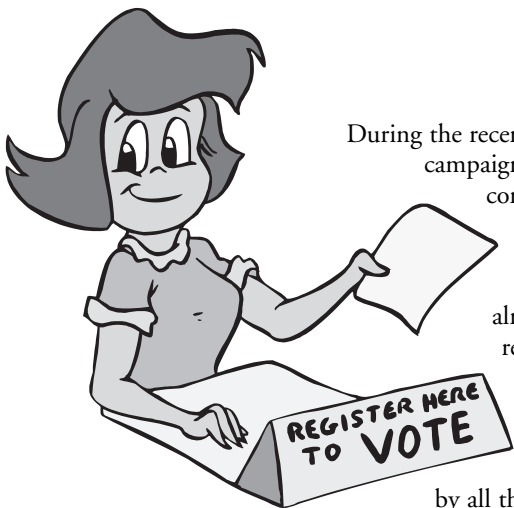
On October 17, 2008 students of Berea College were invited to a French Quarter themed coffee house. As the students walked through the door of Seabury Dorm they were greeted by a huge mural of the French Quarter of New Orleans, and they could smell the red beans and rice and beignets that awaited them in the kitchen. In an attempt to raise awareness of First Book on campus and do a little fundraising the idea of a coffeehouse and open mic night emerged. Since the coffeehouse fell right around the time of the completion of a $\frac{1}{4}$ of the school year all baked goods and coffee were only a quarter. The event was only scheduled to last from 8pm until 11pm but due to an overwhelming turn out the open mic did not close down until 11:30pm. Poets and singers alike shared their talents with the crowd of students. Every few acts or so emcee Brian Owens would call for a food break and First Book volunteers would bring out trays of the baked goods available in the kitchen as a reminder. Then Program Manager of First Book, Lindsey Walker, would remind the crowd of the purpose of First Book. A lot of the students commented that they had never heard of First Book and didn't know the mission of First Book was to provide children from low income families the first new books they own. First Book was overjoyed by the amount of people who came out to show their support and enjoy a fun night of music and food.



Matt Baunack serves fellow student J. Anthony Holbert during the recent First Book Coffee House.

—Lindsey Walker, '09

Program Spotlight: Berea Votes



During the recent history-making election, CELTS students and staff joined in the campus-wide campaign, Berea Votes. CELTS Director Meta Mendel-Reyes was a member of the Berea Votes committee, which kicked off a campus-wide campaign to increase awareness and participation in the election. At the start of the semester, the focus was voter registration. CELTS hosted a workshop on voter empowerment presented by Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC). The workshop was very well-attended by almost 50 people, most of them students. Folks learned how to help people fill out voter registration cards, how to do outreach, and also learned more about KFTC's Voter Empowerment work. All of us appreciated the connection that KFTC made between the act of voting and the goal of empowerment for all who have been disenfranchised or marginalized by the current political system. Voter registration took place all over campus; one of the most successful events was the Volunteer Extravaganza organized

by all the student-led community service programs at CELTS. By the deadline, over 400 people had been registered on campus. Next, Berea Votes shifted attention to voter education and get-out-the-vote efforts. CELTS students participated in a number of events, including the Presidential debate watch sponsored by SGA (and organized by SGA president/Bonner Scholar Tianna Williams), and drove vans to take students to the polls on Election Day. Living in a democracy means that everyone has a voice—and so the results of the election could not have expressed the preference of everyone on campus. Nevertheless, nearly all would agree that the election of Barack Obama made history, and Berea students helped to make history here.

—Dr. Meta Mendel-Reyes

Local drive gathers more food and support despite tough economy

Early on the morning of November 1st, students from Berea College wrapped up this year's 16th annual Hunger Hurts Food Drive after a week-long campaign. The effort aimed at providing the Berea Community Food Bank with emergency food assistance for people living in southern Madison county. Beginning at approximately nine o'clock and ending after one in the afternoon, students embarked in vans to pick up, weigh, and sort non-perishable items donated by community members.

This year, well over 8,500 pounds of food were donated to the Berea Community Food Bank through the food drive. With the economy having taken a downturn over the last couple of months, the fact that this much food was received was exciting. Heather Schill, Coordinator of Student-Led Programs notes, "Last year we received 7,500 pounds of food. This was after additional donations were received in the following week. This year, we collected 7,700 pounds on the day of the event and in the following week, we collected an additional 800 pounds."

Over 100 students and community members participated this year, representing a larger number of organizations than in previous years. Students from CELTS, Campus Christian Center Student Chaplains, Mortar Board, Baptist Campus Ministries, and other student organizations helped to contribute to the success of the food drive this year. Ashlyn Martin, Student Director for CELTS' Student-Led Programs, remarked, "It was incredible to see the amount of volunteers that showed up this year. This is more volunteer groups than we have ever had, and to see how they all came together to serve the community in this way (was) really amazing."

Jerry Workman, Volunteer Coordinator for the Berea Community Food Bank stated, "Without these students and without this food drive, we could not accomplish our mission to provide those in southern Madison County with emergency food."

—Aaron Sachs, '09



Bonner Scholars Raven Weaver and José Victoria sorting items at the Berea Food Pantry, which has received a record-breaking 8,500 pounds in donations this year. INSET: Freshman Bonner Seth Hutchins picking up a donation during the Hunger Hurts food drive.

An open letter from David Sawyer to past and present SFAers

Greetings current and former SFA students!

It was such an honor to direct Students for Appalachia for a decade. Those were 10 of the most important years of my life, and shaped me every bit as much as they shaped the incredible students I had the privilege to work with.

Looking back at some of the cool stuff we wrote about ourselves, I'm amazed at how unusual we were in our approach and in our values. SFA was ahead of its time—smart corporations, nonprofits, and government agencies are adopting many of the ideas and practices that we were experimenting with back then. Things like workplace as community, self managed teams, and corporate social responsibility. Here's some stuff I pulled together:

"Our shared values are about tolerance, hard work, self-direction, leadership, responsibility and fun. We actually believe this stuff."

"Everyone plays a key role, but no one is breathing down your neck to do it. You do it because you understand the importance of the work."

"You participate in a challenging community, gain a leadership experience, rediscover what it means to grow. You learn about group dynamics and make a difference in someone's life. You get involved."

"We divide into teams and make decisions together. We support each other—a lot in fact—but if you are not self-motivated and self-directed you don't belong here. We hire hard and manage easy. This is a program for people who want to be treated like adults and young professionals."

The proof that these weren't just empty words is that SFA students have, of course, kept on doing amazing things. Thanks to Facebook, I've been reconnecting with SFAers from all over the country! Check out just two examples:

"I run an important agency in my community that supports persons with developmental disabilities and mental illness."

"I went back to the Gulf Coast again this year to do work with Katrina victims. I helped organize the trip, taking down 11 graduate students, and was involved in everything, securing most of the funding, down to designing the syllabus."

I was also touched recently by what a former student wrote about the personal dimension of the work at SFA.

"For me the road to awakening and self-realization was started with our community building exercises. That was the first time I ever acknowledged the pain and anger I had from the abuse and neglect I had experienced."

"Transforming ourselves and our world through service." That was our mission, that was on our t-shirts, that summed up what we were all about.

To you current SFA students, know this—you stand on the shoulders of some remarkable people. The SFA students who came before you were flat out amazing in their commitment, effort, intelligence, and compassion. Others will soon stand on your broad shoulders too.



To you former SFA students—what can I say? I love, respect and miss you more than you know.

David Sawyer

David Sawyer directed SFA from 1988-98, helping service learning get off the ground, directing the first Bonner Scholars program, and working with the White House to launch AmeriCorps. He is now an international strategy and leadership consultant based in Portland, Oregon.

Legacies of Service:

SFA Opened Doors

By the time I had reached my junior year at Berea College I was like many other students in that I had worked several different labor assignments. Mine had included being a medical records assistant and nursing assistant at Berea Hospital, a tea sugar decorator in the candy kitchen, and dorm resident advisor. In the fall of 1970, I learned about Students for Appalachia (SFA). The work assignments consisted of helping residents in the Berea or surrounding communities in a variety of areas, especially tutoring children. This garnered my attention. During the 1971 spring semester, I was informed that a labor position was open and I chose to speak with Dan Armstrong, SFA Director, before I applied for a labor assignment transfer.

After accepting the position, I teamed with Vallery LaTurza, a sociology major, and began working in a small family community on the Madison/Rockcastle county line. Ages in the families were from young childhood to 80-plus, thus spanning five generations. The family network was unique in their structure, family sizes, occupations, and belief system. Challenges abounded as Vallery and I set out to provide tutoring for the children.

I soon learned the adult women wanted information about several health issues after becoming aware that I was a nursing student. Questions abounded about reproduction and family planning, children's health, i.e. worms, earaches, toothaches, colds/runny noses and diarrhea, just to name a few. As a result of

the frequent inquiry about health, I began to informally teach classes on a variety of health topics (hand washing frequently) while Vallery assumed tutoring responsibilities with the children. For the first time in my life, I was confronted with domestic violence when one of the young women talked about how she had grown tired of her husband hitting her for no reason.

The SFA experience opened the door for my exposure to community service, community health, and team work. As a "stranger" who was cautiously welcomed into the homes of the four or five families and several extended family members, I learned as much as I taught. Vallery and I visited in the community almost every week for about ten months, excluding school holidays and breaks. We shared in some of their joys and witnessed first hand some of the families' heartaches. We saw some of the children's school grades improve while others did not.

I believe my work with SFA laid the foundation for most of my professional career. I know it greatly influenced my study of Community Health Nursing at the graduate level. I'm not sure I was immediately aware of the impact SFA had on both my professional and personal life. Over time I have thought back to those days in that small community and about my "labor assignment" and know beyond a shadow of doubt, it led me on the course to where I am today of working in public health.

—Ruth Davis, '72

People Who Care—A Natural Progression

My experiences as a volunteer/coordinator with People Who Care were a definite highlight during my years as a student at Berea College. I came to Berea from Somerset, Kentucky, where I was active in my church youth group that volunteered in home improvement projects for locals in need. Joining PWC was a natural progression for me. I came to know some wonderful people through our weekly visits and outings with Kentucky facilities such as Oakwood, Berea Health Care Center, Eastern State Hospital and the Marc Center. It is fair to say that I developed some favorite residents/patients in each of these facilities. One bond in particular formed through these visits was not confined to just our usual Saturday outings. George was a middle-aged gentleman that was a client at Berea's Marc Center, a sheltered workshop for adults with developmental disabilities. I got to know George through a Mountain Day excursion in which PWC volunteers accompanied the Marc Center clients in the College's October ritual at Indian Fort Theater. He spoke in a quick, stumbling cadence, always wore the same scruffy army jacket no matter the weather and loved to joke and tease as he puffed on his pipe. On good weather days, he could often be seen occupying his favorite bench near the Alumni Building watching the students go by. I became a favorite target of his teasing due to my long (and then-fashionable) mullet hairstyle. There were many days I would be en route to food service and would be greeted with George hollering out his greeting of 'SISTER!', the nickname he had tagged me with. Some days he would ask for a dollar to buy some milk or a candy bar at a local store on College Square. He would always pay me back later on. He was a good soul and we appreciated each others' attention.

After graduation, I went to work for a mental health/mental retardation agency in my hometown. My background in PWC was instrumental in my hiring and I enjoyed serving both youth and adults in a variety of capacities for eight years. Although I have since shifted career fields, Berea College's labor and service programs were huge factors in finding rewarding employment in the human services arena. The college's long-standing traditions of serving humankind for the better are ideals by which we are all enriched and should continue in some capacity throughout our lives.

—Todd Scheler, '89

Alumni Reflections

Life-Changing Moments

It is a rare occurrence when one can look back on a moment in his life and claim it as a “life-changing” one. I can do that, however, in remembering my time at Students for Appalachia (SFA) from 1990-1992. I was Sociology major at Berea College, and the many types of community service that I partook in while working at SFA literally set the course for my career as I later pursued a Masters in Social Work and eventually a doctorate. My appreciation of helping those in need, my belief that young people can be a catalyst for resounding change, and the thankfulness with which I approach each day are all informed by my time at SFA and Berea.

I began working in the adult literacy program and will always remember a 50-something year old trucker—“Joe”—whom I taught to read. Joe was reluctant to meet with me at first, but I will always remember the light in his eyes when he read the word “highway” for the first time. That light epitomized everything that SFA tried to promote, and I was thrilled to be a part of it.

The Director of SFA during that period, David Sawyer, became a dear friend and mentor to me and helped guide me through some very difficult times. I remember going out to his beautiful farm for our SFA retreats, and it was there that I was able to reflect on what “service learning” was all about. When I was feeling too sorry for myself, he would say, “Jones, get over your *self!* There’s a world out there...” We travelled to several national service-learning conferences where we slept on the floor, ate whatever we could find, and loved every minute of it.

In 1991, SFA won the prestigious “Points of Light” from President Bush. I remember riding to Washington, DC in a College van and watching in amazement the fiery bright eyes of the deer along the road as we drove through the night in West Virginia. The day we arrived in DC, I sat riveted to the television as parts of LA burned to the ground during the civil uprising that year. The realization of the “two Americas” hit me squarely between the eyes, and shook me to my core. I came back to Berea and wrote an article about that experience which was published in a national service-learning newsletter.

The most important thing that happened to me was that I met my future wife, Melissa Blair, in the summer of 1991. She was a Math and Spanish major from Letcher County and I was a long-haired, guitar-playing Yankee from Ohio. We’re still madly in love after all these years and have two beautiful sons.

Thank you, David, and thank you SFA, for lighting my fire.

—Dr. Blake Jones, '92



Blake and a fellow student leading a COOL Conference workshop in 1991.

Reflections From a Bonner Scholar

It seems kind of funny that I would be sitting here on my couch reflecting on my time at Berea as a Bonner Scholar because we did so much reflection as students five years ago. All kidding aside, those four years as a Bonner Scholar were some of the best years of my life. I grew as a person by being a Bonner Scholar, my eyes were opened to a whole new world and I would not be the person I am today if I had not been a part of such an extraordinary group of people.

One of my first memories of Berea was the tree painted on SFA’s wall, I did not know what to expect at first but I soon learned what responsibilities came along with being a part of a service organization. We could not just call in sick like some of our friends with other campus jobs. We had children waiting for us, who did not necessarily have anyone else to listen to them or play with them. We became a team by doing team building exercises and by doing things like trying to come up with the best way to get the van out of a kid’s yard. Working for SFA and Bonner Scholars was more than a job it was a way of life and it became a part of us. We made wonderful friendships and some of us found our soul mates.

—Bobbi Berry Cummings, '03

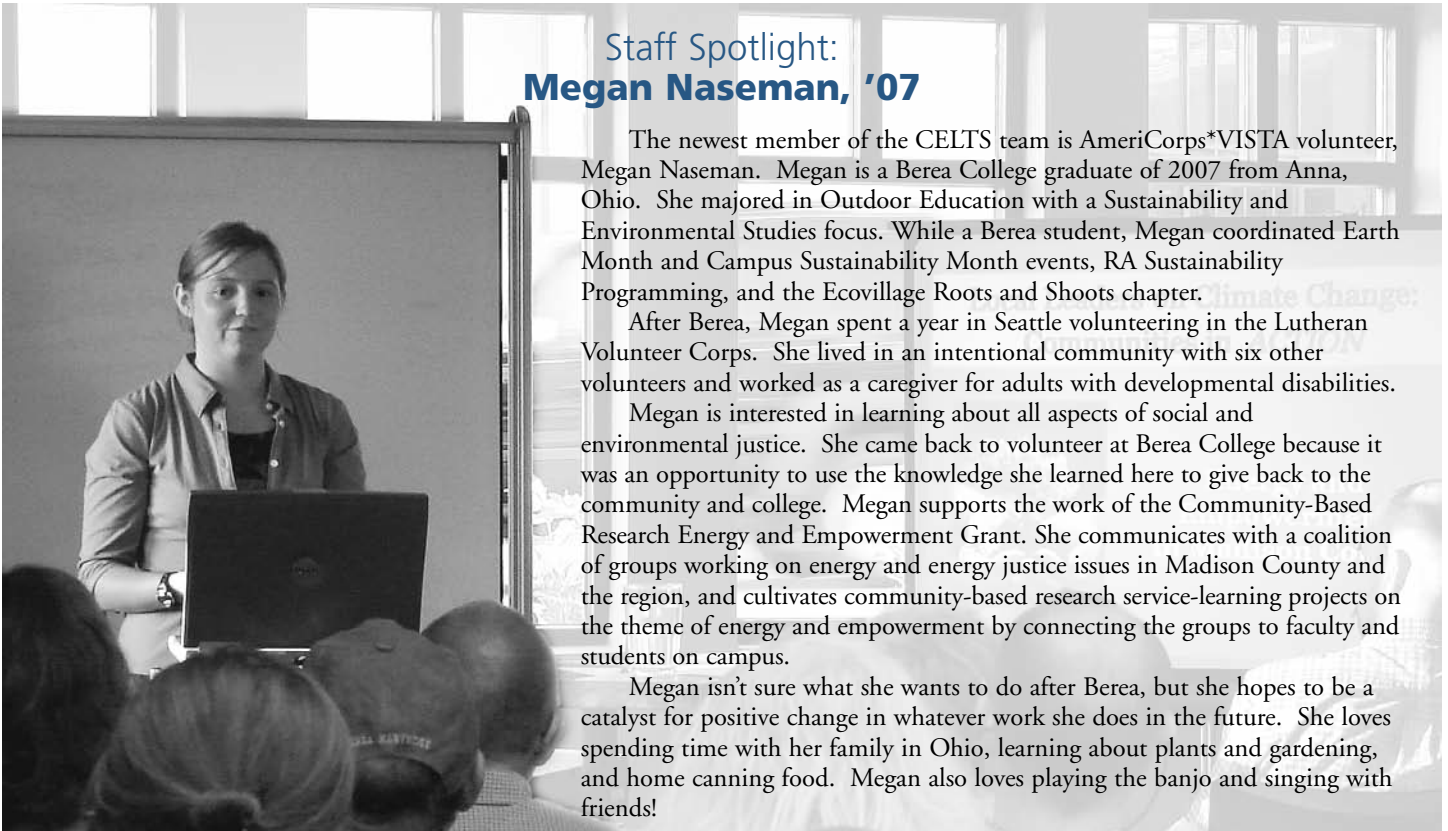
Staff Spotlight: Megan Naseman, '07

The newest member of the CELTS team is AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteer, Megan Naseman. Megan is a Berea College graduate of 2007 from Anna, Ohio. She majored in Outdoor Education with a Sustainability and Environmental Studies focus. While a Berea student, Megan coordinated Earth Month and Campus Sustainability Month events, RA Sustainability Programming, and the Ecovillage Roots and Shoots chapter.

After Berea, Megan spent a year in Seattle volunteering in the Lutheran Volunteer Corps. She lived in an intentional community with six other volunteers and worked as a caregiver for adults with developmental disabilities.

Megan is interested in learning about all aspects of social and environmental justice. She came back to volunteer at Berea College because it was an opportunity to use the knowledge she learned here to give back to the community and college. Megan supports the work of the Community-Based Research Energy and Empowerment Grant. She communicates with a coalition of groups working on energy and energy justice issues in Madison County and the region, and cultivates community-based research service-learning projects on the theme of energy and empowerment by connecting the groups to faculty and students on campus.

Megan isn't sure what she wants to do after Berea, but she hopes to be a catalyst for positive change in whatever work she does in the future. She loves spending time with her family in Ohio, learning about plants and gardening, and home canning food. Megan also loves playing the banjo and singing with friends!



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