



FOUNDATION FOR  
APPALACHIAN OHIO



Growing Home Fellowship

*A Program of the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio*



## Growing Home Fellowship | 2023-2024 Report

Investing in a Flourishing Appalachian Ohio by encouraging and supporting  
our region's next generation of community builders and leaders





## About our Growing Home Fellowship

### ■ *Flourishing people and flourishing communities, today and in perpetuity.*

That's our vision for the 32 counties of Appalachian Ohio. But how do we get there? By investing in a wellspring of community builders committed to the well-being of our region.

In 2023, we launched our Growing Home Fellowship to invest in emerging community leaders who, like us, are committed to ensuring Appalachian Ohio flourishes. Funding from Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Program jump-started the pilot program, with additional support from private donors including an anonymous donor and Ken Taylor of Ohio CAT. We are currently raising funds to sustain and grow the program.

The Growing Home Fellowship launched with an inaugural class of 121 fellows – half of whom were already living in Appalachian Ohio and half who chose to make our communities home.

In exchange for committing to live, work and volunteer in our region for five years, fellows receive a financial stipend and access to a leadership program that includes service, skill development, mentoring and more. Each element nurtures their development as they build connections with peers who share their passion and commitment to community – networks that will advance their success for decades to come.

Through gifts of time, talent, treasure and partnership, we are uplifting the next generation of community leaders who will deliver a **F**lourishing **A**ppalachian **O**hio.

CARA DINGUS BROOK, PRESIDENT AND CEO  
FOUNDATION FOR APPALACHIAN OHIO

# Classroom to Community Cohort Profile

**18-35**

year-olds who work with our communities' K-12 population

**29 of 32**

of our region's counties are served by Growing Home Fellows

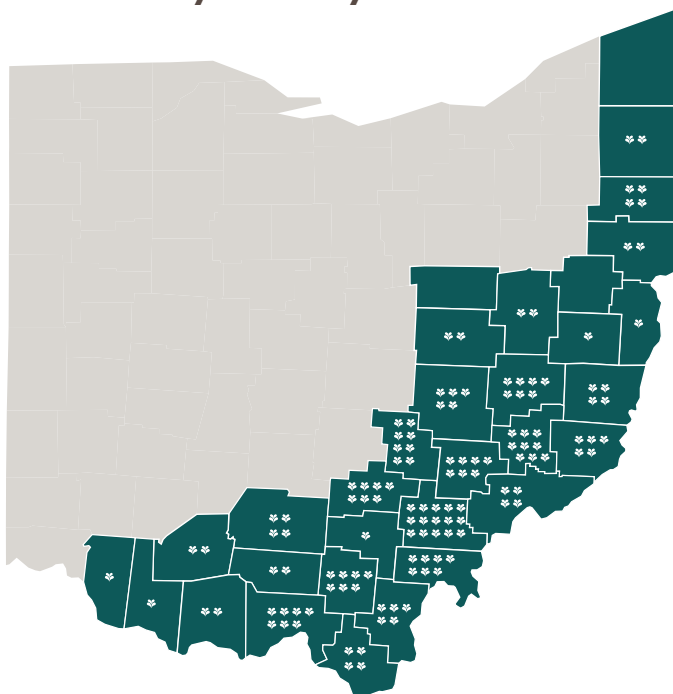
**111**

fellows are currently serving in our Classroom to Community cohort

**100%**

of fellows serve their communities with pride and love for the region

## Fellows by county



## Percentage by role



**72%**

**Classroom Educator**



**14%**

**Student Support Services**

(e.g., behavioral health specialists, school counselors, nurses, psychologists, occupational therapists, speech therapists)

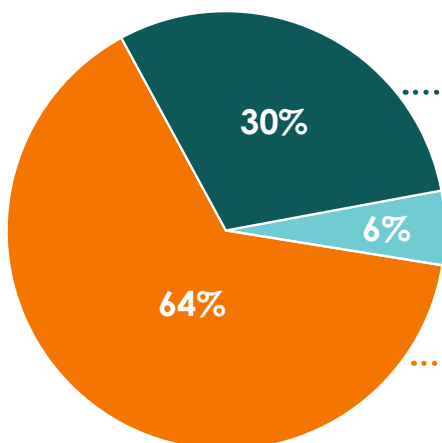


**14%**

**Program Partners**

(e.g., OSU Extension, environmental educators, children's librarian and others working with K-12 students)

## Fellows service focus



### Leading a new start-up project

Including a school-based health clinic, an Appalachian Literary Arts & Storytelling Festival, a mobile food clinic that leverages food as medicine, a community garden and a dog park as a way to build community

### Serving through FAO

Piloting local approaches with the opportunity to scale regionwide, including ones that leverage the science of hope to support vulnerable youth

### Serving with an existing organization

Assuming roles as next-generation leaders for community foundations, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio programs, historical societies, local government committees, food pantries and other community-serving organizations

## Answering the call to lead

Among the many ways our Growing Home Fellows are serving their communities is by stepping into leadership roles in local governments, nonprofits and civic organizations that are vital to the well-being of our neighbors and neighborhoods.

Katrina Baker



### Noble County

Grant review committee for the Noble County Community Foundation

Kirstin Carpenter



### Guernsey County

Cambridge Parks Board

Casey Cox



### Athens County

Nelsonville's Parks and Recreation Committee

Dylan Haynes



### Meigs County

Syracuse Village Council

Kenzie Jadwin



### Morgan County

Burr Oak Alive Board

Trevor Tom



### Muskingum and Noble Counties

Muskingum County Farm Bureau Treasurer

*"Third and Center is thrilled to have Zoie (Clay) join our team of dedicated and community-minded individuals that serve as our board. Her creative approach to problem-solving and vast knowledge of available resources within our community and region has been extremely beneficial. Since her recent board appointment, Zoie has helped facilitate arts programming during our Summer Solstice Music & Arts Festival, assisted with several grant applications, and prepared a proposal for a community garden program. Zoie is a phenomenal asset to our community and to our organization."*

— AMANDA CLEARY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THIRD AND CENTER, LAWRENCE COUNTY



## Fellows gain confidence, step into leadership roles

When our Growing Home Fellows were accepted into the program, many were new to the concept of community involvement outside their roles with K-12 students. But during the first fellowship gathering in April 2023, we challenged them to learn more about their communities – and how they could get involved – by contacting local leaders and civic organizations.

That simple step started fellows on a journey to increased involvement that has led to long-lasting connections, meaningful service opportunities and increased confidence in their ability to lead.

Along the way, we're equipping them with the skills essential to effective leadership, including strategic communication, conflict management, budget and financial management, collaboration skills and how to be an effective board member.



***"The Kiwanis Club of Lucasville has greatly benefited from having three new members (Jake Alley, Christina Myers and Megan Saxby) who are participants in the Growing Home Fellowship program. These three teachers have helped infuse new energy and enthusiasm in our club and our activities. They have also brought with them additional volunteers for club fundraisers and our community events. We are so pleased that they chose to join our Kiwanis Club. The Growing Home Fellowship is a win-win for these teachers and our Kiwanis Club!"***

— DIANE BOSTER, PRESIDENT, KIWANIS CLUB OF LUCASVILLE, SCIOTO COUNTY

## Advancing opportunities across the Pillars of Prosperity

FAO's Pillars of Prosperity represent the foundations of flourishing communities. In 2024, our Growing Home Fellows began implementing service projects they developed that are advancing opportunities across the Pillars and our communities.



### Arts & Culture | Gretchen Weber, Hocking County

A community effort to restore the historic Logan Theater to a community landmark and gathering space – and help revitalize the downtown area as a gateway to the Hocking Hills – is now fully underway, thanks to the state's history-making investment through the Appalachian Community Grants Program. FAO's investment in Gretchen has inspired her to step forward and become the youngest member of the Logan Theater and Community Arts Center board, helping to raise additional funding, support events and plan programming.



*12% of Growing Home Fellows are spearheading projects in service to the Arts & Culture Pillar.*



### Community & Economic Development | Ali Vesey, Highland County

Through her "Give & Gather Project," Ali is creating support for Greenfield's philanthropic endeavors and creating pathways for fellow residents to contribute to those efforts. The project's first phase includes a Service Showcase this November, giving community-serving organizations an opportunity to share their goals and providing residents a chance to learn about local service opportunities. In September, Ali was named Greenfield Village Citizen of the Month after being nominated for her involvement in Main Street Downtown Greenfield.



*35% of Growing Home Fellows are spearheading projects in service to the Community & Economic Development Pillar.*



### Education | Zack Fryman, Scioto County

Zack was drawn to Appalachian Ohio by an educational opportunity – and found a home here. Through his fellowship project, Zack is serving on the Shawnee State University Alumni Council, advancing FAO's investment in a network of young leaders by creating a local version to benefit Scioto County for years to come. Among his efforts, Zack is pursuing ways to find and recruit local alumni committed to the resiliency and vibrancy of campus and community.



*10% of Growing Home Fellows are spearheading projects in service to the Education Pillar.*



### Environmental Stewardship | Teiara Saling, Noble County

After attending Master Gardener Volunteer classes, Teiara successfully applied for a grant to fund a community garden and secured a location at the Caldwell Public Library annex. Teiara inspired local youth and adults to not only plant the garden but to help maintain it. She has worked with other groups to provide free educational programming at this new community resource and, through introductions from FAO, is connecting with the Ohio Department of Health on best practices for community gardens.



*8% of Growing Home Fellows are spearheading projects in service to the Environmental Stewardship Pillar.*



### Health & Human Services | Hannah Thompson, Meigs and Vinton counties

Through her service project, Hannah is expanding her volunteer work with Vinton County's 4-H Program, helping to organize and produce an opportunity for individuals with developmental disabilities to experience "A Day in the Ring." In partnership with the Vinton County Board of Developmental Disabilities, the program pairs participants with 4-H and FFA livestock exhibitors who accompany them into the ring to exhibit an animal at the county fair, fostering collaboration and relationships.



*35% of Growing Home Fellows are spearheading projects in service to the Health & Human Services Pillar.*





## Networking with Ohio's elected officials

In June 2024, we facilitated an event to connect Growing Home Fellows with Ohio's elected officials. For the majority of the fellows participating, this was their first visit to the Statehouse and with elected officials.

Participating fellows toured the Statehouse and attended a legislative session to learn more about how state government operates. The fellows also met with State Rep. Don Jones of Ohio's 95th House

District and detailed their work supporting K-12 students as well as their service to their local communities.

The visit empowered fellows to engage with their elected representatives in the future as they expand their roles as community leaders.

*Pictured with State Rep. Don Jones are (from left) FAO President and CEO Cara Dingus Brook and Growing Home Fellows Peggy Garcia, Blue Scott, Emily Work, Kenzie Jadwin and Trevor Tom.*

## Supporting and growing Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio

Five Growing Home Fellows are dedicating their service to supporting and growing Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio in eight Appalachian Ohio counties (Guernsey, Harrison, Hocking, Monroe, Noble, Perry, Vinton and Washington). Their service projects are focusing on increasing enrollment in the program, developing community engagement activities that connect families whose children are participating in the program with other service providers and fundraising to support the local cost of the program.



In Perry County, Leah Sowers, an intervention specialist at John Glenn High School in Muskingum County, has developed an enterprising and scalable fundraising model that is supporting the program and local farmers. In collaboration with the Ludowici Community Foundation, Leah launched a farmer's market in New Lexington with vendor fees being reinvested to support the local Imagination Library in Perry County. In its first six months, the farmer's market generated enough funding to sponsor the enrollment of six additional children for five years.



## Convening to empower our shared purpose

**Local in depth; regional in reach.** That's a hallmark of our biannual Growing Home Fellowship gatherings that bring leaders out of their communities to learn, connect and build their own network of like-minded individuals committed to the people and communities of our region.

During these events, we:



Partner with individuals serving and leading in their fields at the local, state and regional levels to provide fellows expertise, best practices and encouragement

Explore the foundations of flourishing communities and the roles we all play in ensuring the well-being of those we serve



Develop deeper connections to others who are advancing similar goals

Since our inaugural gathering in April 2023, the fellows' roles in these events have evolved as they are seizing opportunities to help with planning and presenting – all while broadening their leadership experience.



Watch – and be inspired – by leaders who have given their time, expertise and encouragement to our Growing Home Fellows.





## Connecting fellows to funding – and fundraising skills

People – not money – solve problems. But oftentimes, people need money to turn their great ideas into impactful community projects.

As our Growing Home Fellows are implementing their service projects, many of them are discovering the need for funding to turn their dreams for their communities into reality. At the Fall 2024 Growing Home Fellowship gathering, we launched a new method of connecting the fellows to

donors interested in funding their work while equipping the fellows, through applied experience, with new fundraising skills for future success.

Through a pitch competition, five fellows presented funding requests tied to their service projects and answered questions from a panel of judges. Other fellows in the audience voted to determine the winning pitch.

### Presenting fellows were:



**Ashley Cain**  
**Morgan County**

*Farm to Community Mobile Food Pantry, to address food scarcity when schools are out of session by purchasing, packaging and delivering 14 weeks of food boxes to 10 families*



**Bri Jenkins**  
**Jackson County**

*Jackson County Forward, to install vinyl wraps on downtown electrical boxes that include images and QR codes for additional information about local landmarks*



**Brianna Johnson**  
**Hocking County**

*Appalachian Literary Arts & Storytelling Festival, to provide last-stage funding for a two-day celebration of Appalachian storytelling culture in the region*



**Hanna Vera**  
**Belmont County**

*Captina Conservancy, to purchase hiking trail counters to track trail usage trends, helping with event planning, stewardship planning and future grant proposals*



**Rusty Winland**  
**Monroe and Noble counties**

*Beallsville Volunteer Fire Department, to purchase an automated external defibrillator and Ambu bags to assist with emergency cardiac arrest calls*

**Thanks to generous gifts from donors, a total of \$30,000 in grant funding was awarded to the presenting fellows. Each of them received funding as well as guidance in advance of the competition from Guy Land, leadership coach for the Growing Home Fellowship.**

The fellows who pioneered our first – but not last – pitch competition, as well as the judges who shared valuable insights on the pitches, will continue to serve as guides for all fellows as they seek to secure funding for their community service and leadership, both today and for years to come.

## Inspiring and celebrating community building

In October 2023, we hosted our community of givers and distinguished guests in commissioning our inaugural class of Growing Home Fellows during a pinning ceremony at Hocking County's Logan High School.

Part of an evening celebrating and inspiring community building, the commissioning ceremony was followed by a public presentation from David Brooks. The *New York Times* columnist and best-selling author shared insights from his book, "The Second Mountain," which focuses on building a meaningful life through service to your community.



### Watch our full event with David Brooks

With a focus on commitment to community, Brooks' presentation inspires each of us to consider how we can use our "second mountains" to build communities where everyone flourishes.



## Former ARC chief of staff turns leadership coach



During his 30-year tenure with the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), Guy Land's work focused on building a strong and vibrant Appalachian region. So, when the opportunity

arose to assist with our Growing Home Fellowship program, the Mississippi native and Harvard-trained lawyer decided the time was right to transition from full-time federal employment to part-time leadership coach.

"I simply couldn't resist the opportunity to help boost the next generation of leaders for Appalachian Ohio," Guy said. "By equipping them with important leadership skills, the Growing Home Fellowship will position these outstanding young professionals to drive the future of dozens of Ohio communities and

improve the quality of life for thousands of people who call Appalachian Ohio home."

As leadership coach, Guy provides strategic direction for the program by helping to identify key learning objectives and designing leadership development programming, as well as providing fellows one-on-one and small-group leadership coaching.

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***"Now perhaps more than ever, the future of Appalachia requires a cadre of thoughtful, passionate and skilled local leaders, and the Growing Home Fellowship responds to that demand. I view the program – and the work of the fellows in the coming years – as part of my own legacy of strengthening this special region."***





Recent reflections from these emerging community builders

“

*At times, I consider myself ‘the young and inexperienced one’ and doubt my value on a community committee like this – one in which I’m sitting discussing important business with the mayor of all people! It’s built my confidence as well as strengthened the determination and passion I have for my small town.”*

*“Although I am one person, I can do more than I think through making connections and being active in the wonderful organizations that are already in place in my community.”*

“

*“I am more capable than what I had thought.”*

*“I do have a place at the table. When I first started, I was very insecure and felt like I did not belong with the leaders of my community. Why would they want to hear my opinion? However, I am learning that as an educator, I can provide a unique point of view.”*



# ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR APPALACHIAN OHIO

## OUR MISSION

We seek to unleash the potential within Appalachian Ohio by growing and leveraging gifts that advance sustained transformation.

## OUR VISION

Flourishing people and flourishing communities, today and in perpetuity

## OUR IMPACT



**1,550+** grants, scholarships and fellowships totaling **\$9.5 million** awarded in 2023



**700+** donor-established funds



**\$123 million** in charitable assets

## STAY IN TOUCH!

Follow us on social media to learn more about our work in Appalachian Ohio.



Foundation for Appalachian Ohio



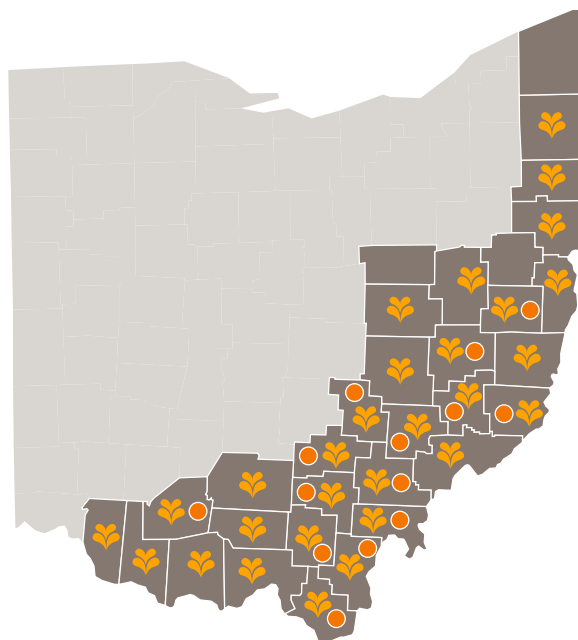
@FDNforappalachianohio



Foundation for Appalachian Ohio

The **Foundation for Appalachian Ohio** is a community of givers who bring together our time, talent and treasure to create opportunities and advance sustained transformations across our 32-county region. We maximize our impact by investing in local solutions, supporting transformative leaders and advancing approaches that are collaborative, holistic, evidence-based and sustainable.

## OUR COMMUNITY



**15 Affiliate Foundations** (including the region-wide African American Community Fund and 14 geographic affiliates)

**90% of the 121 Growing Home Fellows** have been retained in the program's first two years



= County with one or more Growing Home Fellow(s)



= Affiliate Foundation

## OUR PILLARS OF PROSPERITY

Together with our community of givers, we advance opportunities across five funding areas, known as our Pillars of Prosperity.



Arts & Culture



Community & Economic Development



Education



Environmental Stewardship



Health & Human Services

Our investments improve health, create educational opportunities, advance economic development and environmental stewardship, and provide access to arts and cultural experiences.

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