

2020 NEWSLETTER

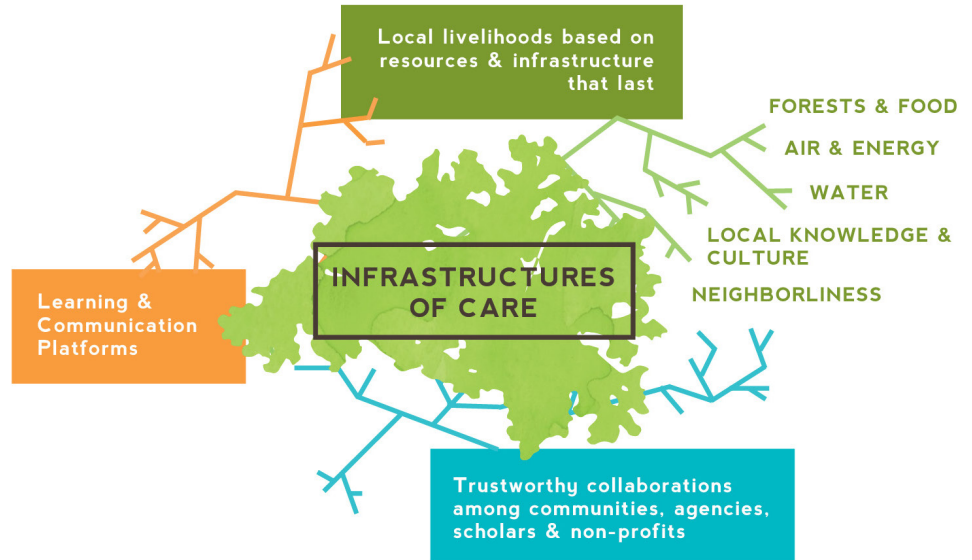
BUILDING A NEW INFRASTRUCTURE OF HOPE...

Death did not come equally in 2020—to our national shame. Terrible inequalities are laid bare and escalating in ways that we cannot yet imagine. We owe it to those we have lost this year to apply the hard truths of 2020 as we rebuild our common life in 2021. The pandemic hit hardest in communities where work cannot be video-conferenced and where basic life goods and services are already too insecure, too unaffordable, too unsafe.

We need, together, to build a new infrastructure of hope to provide far better support to the growing number of chronically underserved communities. With our extraordinary partners,

LIKEN FOCUSES ON:

- Basic life needs and infrastructures
- Local livelihoods based on resources that last
- Collaborations to support communities as they manifest their dreams
- Participatory education and publications.



CENTRAL APPALACHIAN FOLK AND TRADITIONAL ARTS PROJECT

In a year-long survey of folk and traditional arts across Appalachian Ohio, West Virginia, and Virginia, our gifted and dedicated field team (of 10 folklorists and artists) documented a remarkable richness of folk and traditional arts. The Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation (MAAF) commissioned LiKEN to conduct the survey and to distill findings into a plan for future philanthropy. To provide feedback and guidance in this process, MAAF coordinated a distinguished Advisory Group and public feedback sessions.



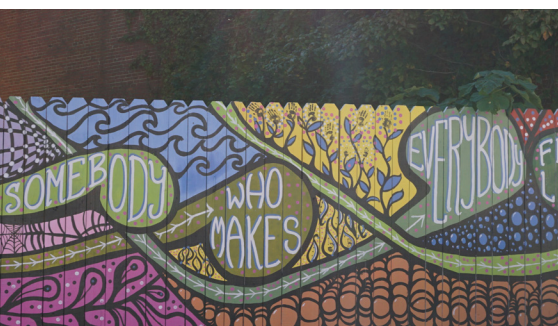
Ron and Jill Carson, co-founders of the Appalachian African American Cultural Center in Lee Co., VA.

Photo by Nicole Musgrave

From the 112 county reports prepared by fieldworkers and our project summits, LiKENeers Mary Hufford and Betsy Taylor distilled two documents:

- **A Final Report** documents 566 artists or groups, 665 festivals or events, and 385 programs carrying on a vibrant diversity of cultural and ethnic traditions—including African American, Italian, Greek, Polish, Serbian, German, Scandinavian, Irish, many other European and, now increasingly, Asian, African, and Central and South American traditions.
- **A Comprehensive Program Proposal** proposes an expansive and aspirational list of programs and activities that could address the needs identified in the Report.

For more on what MAAF is doing to carry on the inspiration and momentum of the CAFTA project, go to www.midatlanticarts.org/grants-programs/



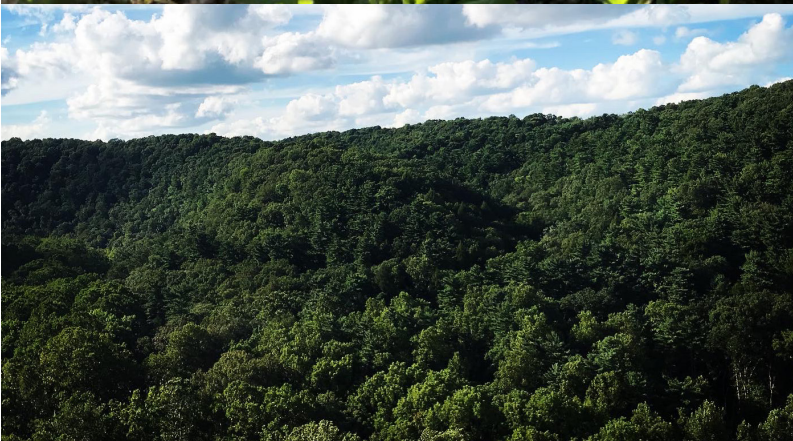
One of many murals and public art works in downtown Pennington Gap in Lee Co., VA.

Photo by Nicole Musgrave

RISING VOICES CENTER FOR INDIGENOUS AND EARTH SCIENCES

Of all LiKEN's projects, Rising Voices was best able to adapt to the pandemic context, thanks in large part to the technological broadcast network capacity developed in previous years by long-time RV partners, Lomikai Media and the Olohana Foundation. The annual RV gathering moved into a series of online workshops (recordings and reports can be found at <https://risingvoices.ucar.edu/annual-workshops>). Participants came together virtually from across the United States, including Alaska, Hawai'i, the Pacific and Caribbean Islands, and around the world for a rich and honest discussion about the climate-related challenges that are most impactful and important

to them personally, their work, and their community; how Indigenous Knowledges, science, and sovereignty respond to these changes; and how we bring our whole selves to this work and that informs our collaborations and partnerships to weave together the policy, science, and practice strands to support adaptive responses. The conversations focused around the themes of phenology, community relocation and site expansion, energy systems, water systems, food systems, and health. Rising Voices is co-administered by the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research/National Center for Atmospheric Research (UCAR|NCAR) and LiKEN, in partnership with Haskell Indian Nations University, the Indigenous Peoples' Climate Change Working Group, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office for Coastal Management. Funding support is provided by UCAR's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and NOAA's Office for Coastal Management.



Photos by Chris Burney

APPALACHIAN MOTHER FOREST PROGRAM

Under the able leadership of LiKENeer Chris Burney, we started the "Sharing Successes in Agroforestry Across Central Appalachia" project in May 2020, with funding from the National Agroforestry Center of the US Forest Service. This project is developing educational materials about livelihoods from non-timber products sustainably harvested from the extraordinarily biodiverse and ancient forests of Central Appalachia, including understory botanicals, mushrooms, fruits, nuts, and syrups. We are distilling success stories and producing videos that can be shared over diverse platforms to attract new farmers, especially youth. Educational videos focus on topics that are most useful for beginners, ranging from land access, planting, ecological site assessment, to sales. Testimonial videos will document traditional Appalachian practices that reflect rich, intergenerational knowledge. Briefing papers are being designed for service providers such as extension agents and nonprofit organizations as they help landowners make decisions about sustainable management of their forest, and opportunities for income generation.

Collaborators include Tom Hammett (Virginia Tech), Mary Hufford (Ohio State Univ. and LiKEN), James Thompson (West Virginia Univ), Betsy Taylor and Ruby Daniels (LiKEN), Wilma & Terry Steele, Sprouting Farms, Yew Mountain Center, Future Generations.

INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST LIKENEER!

Ruby Daniels, LiKEN Community Engagement Coordinator

Ruby Daniels started to work with us in September on our agroforestry project, and has rapidly become a key advisor across various LiKEN projects in her role as Community Engagement Coordinator. Ruby moved back to WV to found her herbal company and farm located in Raleigh County (Creasy Jane's Herbal Remedies www.creasyjane.com) where she grows herbs and heritage vegetables and manufactures soaps, tinctures, herbal teas, salves, body butters, bath salts, and flower products. All of her products were inspired by her grandmother, Fannie Shepherd, who taught Ruby about herbs during her many visits to the family homeplace. In addition to her Masters degree in herbalism, Ruby draws on the multigenerational heritage of Appalachian forest and herbal knowledge in her family (who have resided in the area that is now West Virginia since the 1700s, including several generations of coal miners). Integrating traditional and local knowledge with emerging agroforestry sciences, Ruby's work supports the development of an herbal industry in the state of West Virginia.



Herbs used in "Night Night Tea" grown and manufactured at Ruby's farm. German Chamomile and Lemon Balm are grown in an organic manner at Creasy Jane's and no pesticides are used.

WATER COLLABORATORY

Communities in eastern Kentucky, face challenging regulatory and natural terrains as they struggle to secure safe, reliable, and affordable water. Working closely with Martin County Concerned Citizens (MCCC), the Appalachian Citizens Law Center (ACLC) and others, Ricki Draper (LiKEN Community Engagement Coordinator) continued to communicate community concerns and perspectives to key state regulatory bodies. Ricki and ACLC's Mary Cromer's "Drinking Water Affordability Crisis Report" found that drinking water is unaffordable for 46% of Martin County residents. Over the past year, in a collaborative project with Dr. Jason Unrine and colleagues at the University of Kentucky, Ricki and MCCC gathered interviews and water samples from 97 households randomly selected across Martin County, and found that 99% reported significant problems in water quality and 88% do not drink their tap water because they do not consider it safe. 47% of homes had at least one contaminant above the allowable limit, with the most serious being disinfection byproducts (a problem that is caused by system mismanagement). In July and August, Ricki and our partners reported back to communities about this citizen science.

All of these problems are getting much worse fast. Martin County gets attention because of the eloquence and effectiveness of



Ricki Draper and Nina McCoy sampling water quality in Martin County, KY

grassroots leaders like Nina and Mickey McCoy. But, these water problems are systemic, widespread, and escalating in underserved communities across America. Because solutions cannot come at a county level, LiKEN and our wonderful partners have started an East Kentucky Water Network which meets biweekly. With funding from the UK-CARES program, LiKEN is conducting a community water listening tour across six KY counties. In September, LiKEN began work with Ohio State University faculty to nurture AWARE, a knowledge sharing network on natural and tap water systems in Appalachian Ohio and Kentucky.



Left: The historic home belonging to descendants of Willis Johnson, Sr. in Charleston, South Carolina. Right: Two of Mr. Johnson's heirs and current owners of the home, Rebecca Campbell (left) and Catherine Braxton (right). Photos by Cassandra Johnson Gaither, USDA Forest Service.

HEIRS' PROPERTY PROJECT

Heirs' property is created when land passes without a will to two or more descendants who become "tenants in common" of the property. This kind of "tangled title" can make families vulnerable and impact generational wealth. In October 2020, with funds from the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Center at Alcorn State University in Mississippi, LiKEN began a project investigating heirs' property. In Alabama and Georgia, we will assess outcomes of the Uniform Partition of Heirs' Property Act (UPHPA) by looking at changes in partition sales since the passing of the act and by talking to local officials, lawyers, and heirs' property-owning families. In eastern Kentucky, we will assess the frequency of heirs' property, and the potential impact of the UHPA law.

The project is directed by LiKENer Megan White with co-Principal Investigators, Dr. Cassandra Johnson Gaither (Social Scientist, U.S. Forest Service) and Dr. Betsy Taylor (LiKEN Executive Director) and in collaboration with highly qualified advisors and partners.

GET INVOLVED!

If you are interested in any of our projects, please get in touch with us!

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

The COVID-19 pandemic hit us like a landslide that cut us off from the avenues of community engagement that we normally consider our most vital pathways. All of our projects continue, however.

This was supposed to be a year of outreach through small community forums. After the pandemic hit, we did not want to go completely online, because of the digital divide in communities we serve. We tried to adapt with outdoor and physical spacing of meetings. We kept hoping we would find some pandemic-safe way to reach those without good internet. But, finally, when the cold weather came, we had to change course. Several LiKENEers were disabled for weeks at a time by COVID, and we lost expected income from our (now closed) Airbnb.

Like farmers who come inside to hunker down in the cold and dark of the year with tools to fix and tales to tell, we are learning the power of repair, reflection, distillation, and regeneration in dark times. In these mid-pandemic months, we are preparing for a new year in which we can once again congregate safely. We are constantly on videoconference, building remarkable new collaborations with activists and scholars working on care for water, forest, climate, and cultural commons--and significantly

deepening our mutual learning. I can hardly wait to share the details of these very exciting new collaborations! Please stay tuned. We are very excited by our new communication plan, which will provide an array of new publications on a regular basis.

Your loyal support over the past several years has been extraordinary. Almost none of our grants adequately cover actual staff time and 'back-office' costs. But, thanks to you all and the enthusiasm and dedication generated by all of our webs of passionate volunteers, we keep on keeping on. Please stay in touch!

It is with much gratitude for your past support that I end with a request for a donation to help us do the linking and listening that funders tend not to fund, but which are often the most important factors in real success.

With much appreciation for all you do and give,



Betsy Taylor
Executive Director

HELP SUPPORT
THE EFFORTS OF LIKEN
MAKE A DONATION

LiKEN is a link-tank for communities - to build capacity to grow good livelihoods based on local assets, to monitor community health and wealth to avoid boom and bust, and to take evidence-based action for future well-being based on deep understanding of the past. Please help sustain our work with a donation today!



DONATE ONLINE

www.likenknowledge.org/donate



MAIL A DONATION

LiKEN 109 Rosemont Garden, Lexington, KY 40503