This month marks the beginning of our Foundation’s 10th year. We believe our success in growing from startup to scale-up calls for celebration. It also calls for forward thinking because there’s no doubt, our greatest accomplishments as a Foundation and as the Appalachian region still lie ahead.

This journey began with a few people sitting around a table with just one thing in mind. If communities in southeastern Kentucky were going to thrive, it was up to the people in those communities to make it happen. We wanted to be different. There had been no innovation in the way we approached philanthropy and community development, how we thought about the future, or even who we included in that thinking. We pooled some resources and got passionate about our mission — being a catalyst for community collaboration and charitable giving; building capacity and creating permanent, locally controlled community assets.

We believed a strong network of committed local boards could have a big impact on changing the trajectory of communities plagued with economic decline. We believed there were donors with hearts and minds committed to the region that needed a way to make their donations matter. We believed if we brought people in communities together to work harder and smarter, we could create communities where people could thrive. And we did it.

From a remote little office in Chavies we started one little fund for Perry County. Now, as an anchor institution in downtown Hazard, we have funds for counties spanning from Pike to Clinton. We’re growing endowment funds for a strong base of nonprofits that build houses, care for children, shore up our schools, support our elders and create spaces for all of us to enjoy the outdoors. Young people are getting scholarships that allow them to go as far as their dreams can take them. All because of thousands of people who give up their time, talent and resources to make what can feel impossible, possible.

Perhaps even more exciting, the Foundation provides a backdrop for groups of people across the region to think big and put ideas into action. Becoming one of the nation’s premier drone ports, building entrepreneurial ecosystems, networking farmers markets to increase sales or simply teaching young children how to sail a boat all become doable when there’s infrastructure in place to help bring resources, steward funds, and connect and meet with people who share a vision for vibrant, thriving communities.

Many people marvel at how we managed to build such a strong, integrated system that makes room for everybody to participate in lifting up a place like Appalachian Kentucky. It’s because we all care so deeply about this place — our place. We believe that communities like ours offer something vastly different to the chaos and gridlock of many urban centers, and just maybe that’s what our nation needs right now.

We also know we have much more work to do, and we know we can do it better. And we will continue to prove it to the rest of the world.

Thank you for being on this journey with us,

Gerry
Leslie County 911 Dispatchers Memorial

Certified 911 Dispatchers actively work with callers while remaining calm in stressful situations, providing lifesaving information, and keeping emergency response units well-informed of situations as they develop. While memorials dedicated to Law Enforcement, Firefighters, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) exist in Kentucky, none are dedicated to Dispatchers. Phyllis Pennington, a devoted Certified 911 Dispatcher with the Leslie County 911 service, decided that change was needed. Upon completion of her 911 Dispatcher training with the Department of Criminal Justice at Eastern Kentucky University, Phyllis returned home to work on her idea of creating a 911 Dispatcher Memorial in her own community of Leslie County. With hard work, encouragement from family and friends, support from the community including Leslie County Fiscal Court, Leslie County Judge Executive Jimmy Sizemore, Wolfe and Sons Funeral Home, and a grant from the Leslie County Community Foundation the Leslie County 911 Dispatchers Memorial was completed in November 2018. The Memorial is located at 24770 Hwy 421 in Huston, KY. This memorial is dedicated to Certified 911 Dispatchers registered through the Department of Criminal Justice in Kentucky that have passed on.

Leslie County may be a small community with somewhat limited resources, but this Memorial is positively one of a kind and the citizens of Leslie County are extremely proud to have this display of dedication in their town.

Craft Academy Interview

Emilee Stamper

On December 14th, 2018, over 1,500 students received degrees from Eastern Kentucky University. Emilee Stamper was among them, but she differed from most of her peers receiving Bachelor of Science degrees. While the average graduate is 23 years old, Emilee earned her degree of just 19 years old. She graduated from the Craft Academy for Excellence in Science and Mathematics in 2017, and was a member of its first graduating class. The Craft Academy is a dual-enrollment high school on the campus of Morehead State University, which allows its students to graduate high school with up to 60 hours of college credit. “Honestly I don’t think I could have done it without the Craft Academy,” Emilee said about her time as an underclassman. “I had not gone to the Craft Academy I would have never got into college and I would still be going and not be graduated. The Craft Academy and this staff really helped me get where I am today and I can’t say any them enough.”

Craft Academy graduates are eligible for a scholarship through the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky to assist them in completing their degree. In 2019, the Foundation has already awarded nearly $300,000 in scholarships. Emilee was one of over 80 Craft Academy alumni to have been previously awarded, making her dream of earning a Criminal Justice degree a reality. “I have wanted to pursue a career in the law enforcement field since before middle school that I can remember,” she said about her degree choice. “I started with just seeing television shows like Boss, Ncis, Criminal Minds, etc. Then I actually started taking classes in for my high school and knew it was what I wanted to do for the long run.”

Even though she is already ahead of most students her age, Emilee doesn’t plan on stopping. “I plan to start graduate school in August and continue pursuing criminal justice. Eventually I would like to have a career with the FBI and be able to investigate crimes.”

She advised other students who will soon be graduating and entering college for the first time, “Manage your time wisely. Procrastination is one of my worst habits and made college harder than it should have been. You can, and should, enjoy going out with friends and join clubs and sports as it will really make the college experience so much more memorable and enjoyable to you, but it all has to be on an schedule so that you can make sure what you need to get done gets done.”

The group will commission several public art displays to reflect the County’s rich traditions and showcase the beauty of the community.

With your help, the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky has become a more effective partner for impacting the causes you care about. Thank you for working with us.

Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky was initially accredited with National Standards in December 2011, and has been re-accredited three additional times.