



# SALS JOURNAL

*a publication of the Southern Appalachian Labor School*

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Spring/Summer 2009

## 18th Solidarity Day Juneteenth & Emancipation Event

The flags will wave again to celebrate another year of good works here at SALS. On Saturday June 13, 2009 at the SALS community center in Beards Fork, we will host our 18<sup>th</sup> annual solidarity Festival.

We've lined up an exciting group of performers, including the Harping for Harmony's John Lozier.

There will be displays of various kinds, especially those in forming the public about some of the things that SALS has accomplished this year and throughout the years.

Games and activities will be available for kids - inflatable play items such as a waterslide and trampoline.

The event will be held outside, however, in the event of inclement weather we will bring the celebration inside the roomy community center. Make note of the date and plan to join us for joyful day of celebration and sharing old friends. And you.



*Waterslide fun at a previous year's Festival  
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## SALS Youth & Staff Meet First Lady

Three young adults who are part of SALS youth programs met with First Lady Michelle Obama, Senator John Kerry, Martin Luther King III, and others on the National Mall in front of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC.

Wesley Jones, Allan Holley and Alisha Young, accompanied by SALS Director John David and AmeriCorps Director Artie Mullins, were among 100 young adults involved in building a "green" energy efficient house on the Mall. The house will be moved and completed in Brownsville, Texas for a family that was hit by a hurricane.

First lady Michelle Obama came to the site and complemented the youth for their involvement by noting that "community service is an integral part of empowering our

*Continued on page eleven*



*First lady Michelle Obama visits with YouthBuild AmeriCorps members who are celebrating their 30th anniversary by building an affordable, energy-efficient house. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)*

# Let's Truly Honor Cesar Chavez

By Dick Meister, from *Portside.org*

It's way past time that Congress declared the March 31 birthdate of Cesar Chavez a national holiday. President Obama agrees. So do the millions of people who are expected to sign petitions being circulated by the United Farm Workers, the union founded by Chavez.

Eight states and dozens of cities already observe Chavez' birthdate as an official holiday - and for very good reason. As the UFW notes, "He inspired farm workers and millions of people who never worked on a farm to commit themselves to social, economic and civil rights activism. Cesar's legacy continues to educate, inspire and empower people from all walks of life."

Obama says, "We should honor him for what he's taught us about making America a stronger, more just, and more prosperous nation," and for providing inspirational strength, "as farm workers and laborers across America continue to struggle for fair treatment and fair wages."

Chavez showed, above all, that the poor and oppressed can prevail against even the most powerful opponents - if they can organize themselves and adopt non-violence as their principal tactic. "We have our bodies and spirits and the justice of our cause as our weapons," Chavez explained.

The cause, of course, was that of the nation's highly exploited farm workers. Although their work of harvesting the food that sustains us all is one of society's most important tasks, their pay was at or near the poverty level, they typically had few fringe benefits and very little legal protection from employer mistreatment.

Most lacked even such simple on-the-job amenities as toilets and fresh drinking water and were regularly exposed to pesticide poisoning and other hazards. Their living conditions were generally as abominable.

As a farm worker himself, Chavez carefully put together a grass-roots organization that enabled the workers to form their own union. Then they won the essential support of millions of outsiders who heeded the UFW's call to boycott the grapes, lettuce and other produce of growers who refused to grant them union rights and the decent pay and conditions that came with unionization.

Many others before Chavez had tried and failed to form an effective farm workers' union and few - if any - of those who claimed expertise in such matters thought Chavez would be any different. But they failed to account for the tactical brilliance, creativity and just plain stubbornness of Chavez, a sad-eyed, disarmingly soft-spoken man who talked of militancy in calm, measured tones, a gentle and incredibly patient man who hid great strategic talent behind shy smiles and an appearance of utter candor.

It took five years, but in 1970 the UFW finally won the first farm union contracts in history. Five years later, the union won the pioneering California law that requires

growers to bargain collectively with farm workers who vote for unionization. That has led to marked improvement in the treatment of many of the state's farm workers. Their pay, benefits and working conditions are still short of what they should be, but the law has given them the weapon needed to win better treatment.

What's most needed now is to spread the legal right of unionization to the hundreds of thousands of mistreated farm workers outside California. Congress could do that by simply including farm workers in the National Labor Relations Act, the 73-year-old New Deal law that grants union rights to most non-agricultural workers.

Jerry Cohen, who served for 14 years as the UFW's chief attorney, is leading a drive to get Congress to take the necessary action and at the same time include another group of highly exploited workers — domestics— who are not covered by the law.

In a letter to Labor Secretary Hilda Solis urging the Obama administration to back the proposal, Cohen compared the exclusion of farm workers and domestics to the situation in racist South Africa under Apartheid. "Blacks," as Cohen said, were specifically excluded from the protections of South Africa's equivalent of the National Labor Relations Act.

And though in passing the U.S. law in 1935, "Congress was not so blunt as to deal out 'blacks' and 'browns' specifically," said Cohen, "most farm workers and domestics are in fact black or brown. For 73 years our sleight of hand has been more subtle but no less damaging because race, powerlessness and economic injustice are inextricably intertwined."

Certainly Congress should declare a Cesar Chavez holiday. But more than that, Congress should finally extend to all Americans the basic right of unionization that Cesar Chavez spent his life seeking and defending.

Dick Meister, a veteran San Francisco journalist, is co-author of "A Long Time Coming: The Struggle to Unionize America's farm Workers." Contact him through his website, [www.dickmeister.com](http://www.dickmeister.com).

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# Director's Report

by John David

This has been a tough period for non profits such as SALS. Charitable giving has decreased substantially due to lower returns with Foundation investments. One Foundation indirectly involved with SALS through YouthBuild USA actually disappeared as the result of the Madoff scandal.

The staff and youth have been very understanding as we push forward during difficult times. We have new initiatives, such as obtaining coal camp houses for rehabilitation and the Regina (New River) Apartments. The EPA provided us with a small Environmental Justice award to provide education about human lead and mercury contamination. Several small grants have been obtained for assisting with our after-school and Energy Express summer programs. In addition, many staff members have written proposals for a variety of projects.

Many with SALS, including Brenda Winter, Vickie Smith, Jimmy Adkins, John Cline, Robbie Massey, Kathryn South, and Gary Zuckett have lost family members over the past period. We also lost a long-time member of the staff, George Hensley, Jr. who passed away in mid-February. Several friends of SALS have also passed away.

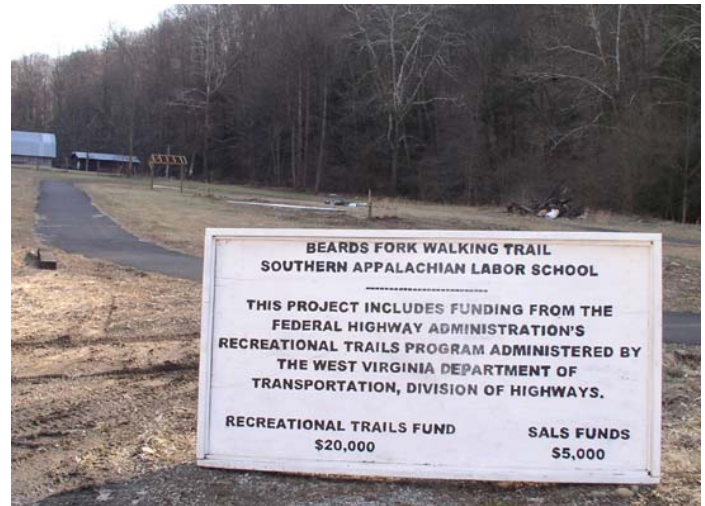
The Volunteer Dorm is evolving toward completion. Costs have escalated and we are grateful that the WV Development Office added additional funds. Several Spring Break university teams (Wartburg College, Rochester Institute of Technology, Florida State, Boston University, University of Miami, Madison (Wisconsin) Technical College, Rutgers, and the University of Illinois) and Global Volunteers have assisted with the project and Sadida David did her senior interior design project by designing the commercial kitchen.

Elsewhere, you will read about young adult activity on green building at the U.S. Capitol. Several youth also completed their GEDs, in some cases after many years of effort. Vickie Smith, Construction Manager, completed her college degree at WVU-Tech and many on the staff completed short courses on counseling issues. Brenda Winter, Debbie Spurlock, and Artie Mullins are continuing to offer housing counseling and home-buyer education workshops for the public.

Alisha Young and Gary Zuckett are again coordinating Flex-E-Grant workshops for staff development and organizational sustainability. There has also been increased interest in using the walking track with Dr. Dan Doyle's clinic effort. Ann Johnson, our newest VISTA, is working on developing a community garden. Kathryn South-Adkins is gearing up a revived summer youth program and an at-risk youth mentoring initiative as a result of stimulus funds.

Various people including Virgil Payne and Vickie Mullins, have been working hard on food sales and our effort to market Kroger gift cards continues. SALS obtains 5% of all money re-loads onto the special gift cards, which can be

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*Our Beards Fork walking trail now has paving*

used for groceries, gasoline, and prescriptions. Debbie Spurlock, with the help of others, is handling the SHARE co-op food program, along with the FEMA emergency program.

Wilda and Regina need to be recognized and complimented for their work. Regina comes to SALS through the Experience Works program and Wilda is with the Foster Grandparents program.

SALS was accepted as a member of the Federation of Appalachian Housing Enterprises and re-certified as a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) by the WV Housing Development Fund representing HUD.

SALS Solidarity and Cultural Festival will once again be held as part of a tribute to June Tenth on Saturday, June 13, 2009. The event will feature a ribbon cutting for the New Dorm, Walking Track, and the county's first shuffle board court.

The after school program, which has limped along without 21<sup>st</sup> Century funds, has had record enrollment and many special events. John Lozier, a WVU Professor who travels the world playing harps, was one of the recent presenters.

Many of you have asked for our story in the context of funding shortfalls and stimulus promises. Our recipe has been to manage with caution, maintain cash, diversify funding sources, and explore new directions. In regard to examples of the latter, we are looking at replacing single wide trailers in a massive way, rehabilitating abandoned apartment complexes, directly purchasing homes for rehabilitation and promoting green building with training.

KUDOS! Two members of the SALS family graduated from WVU-Tech. Ann Johnson, who is the newest SALS' VISTA, picked up a B.S. Degree in Printing Management. Vickie Smith, SALS Construction Manager, picked up a B.S. Degree in Career-Technical Education. Congratulations to both!

Many thanks to all of you who have cared and shared during the past period. With your sustained help, we hope to continue making a difference and constructing change from the bottom up.

# YouthBuild USA's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary-Youth Reflections

On March 15-18, 2009 YouthBuild USA held its 20<sup>th</sup> annual Conference of Young Leaders in Washington D.C. It was the 20<sup>th</sup> year in a row where there was a gathering of 100 YouthBuild participants who had shown leadership at their home site and were chosen to represent their organization. It was also marking 30 years that YouthBuild had become an organization. The four days were very event filled with workshops to try to instill leadership in these young participants.

During the first day everyone was gathered together to go through orientation so that the youth would know what is expected from them during their time there. They were introduced to the founder and president of YouthBuild USA Dorothy Stoneman who let out the big surprise that we would be meeting the First Lady Michelle Obama at our national Green Service Day on the National Mall in D.C.

On Day two, it was critical that we were to pay attention to what would be going on in our sessions because we were being trained for activities at Capitol Hill Day. Capitol Hill Day is where we would go and talk to our state representatives and express the need for more funding to expand YouthBuild, not only in our state but in the entire nation as well. It was great to be prepped on how to approach the representatives and express how YouthBuild has changed our lives for the better.

The third day was National Green Service Day and it was the most exciting of them all. The day began before the sun even rose and we headed to the Mall to enjoy our day viewing stations that would teach us of more green efficient ways to build homes and helping to build an actual "Green House". Some of the stations included safer insulation that was made out of recycled materials and how to be costly when buying home interior appliances. The "Green House" that was built would be shipped to Brownsville, Texas to a family that lost their home in hurricane Dolly. The home was constructed using recycled materials. The First Lady Michelle Obama was given a tour of the stations and of the "Green House". After her tour, she spoke encouraging words that commended the youth on their effort to turn their life in a new direction. She also talked of how important it is to give back to the communities that they may have helped destroy prior to their YouthBuild involvement.

The Final Day which is considered the most important day was when we ventured to Capitol Hill to talk with our state representatives. Specific things we were supposed to express were that YouthBuild received 50 million dollars in the stimulus package and that as a whole we were seeking 170 million for the fiscal year of 2010. The first representative that we actually met was Congressman Rahall who has been a long time supporter of the YouthBuild movement. While talking with him we got to express how important

YouthBuild was to us and our community and that his continued involvement would be imperative. The next representative that we talked with was the Legislative Assist for Senator Robert C. Byrd who would give Senator Byrd a direct report of what we talked about and how important it was for him to closely look at the appropriation including YouthBuild. Senator Byrd is on the appropriation committee and he can not sign the bill because he is one of the Senators who decide if the bill gets passed or not.

In closing we were overwhelmed and enlightened to be a part of such a monu-mental conference that marked 30 years of youth giving back to their communities while gaining education and construction skills. We hope that our efforts will help to expand the YouthBuild programs to communities who need it dearly and to keep the existing programs open.

## Just Another Day in Paradise

*by Ann Johnson*

I was recently able to attend a REAL (Rural Entrepreneurship Action Learning) Entrepreneur Training at Chief Logan Lodge, Hotel and Conference Center. The Hi-Y Leadership sponsored the program. The facilitator was Susan Rice – entre-preneurship coordinator for the West Virginia Department of Education. She was excellent. The purpose was to help those of us who work with children find innovative ways to reaching and teaching them.

Every morning at the REAL Training we would get our agenda for that day. Some of the activities we did were: Making Choices, Hometown Teams, Structures, Creativity Weave, Spoons, Trash to Treasure, Slug Slime, and Toxic Spill. If you want to know what these are you can volunteer to work with our after school program and I will have a "teach the teacher" day!

The paradise was in learning something new every day and having access to an indoor pool, hot tub, and fitness center every evening. We did a lot of interactive activities that I know would be great for the afterschool program. I have been excited about working them into the program. However, there is a need for teachable volunteers. As a VISTA it is frustrating to have the responsibility to bring in volunteers and programs for the children but not be able to do direct service with the children. The challenge for us is to record what is done. We need better records of what is accomplished or how it was accomplished. We also need a volunteer database to draw from as well as a record of networking and an organized filing system. I hope

to work on this for the next VISTA who follows me so that when he/she does come in she/he can build on what has already been accomplished. This should be real progress.

The best way to go forward is to build on a solid foundation of accomplishments, learn from past failures, and grasp present opportunities. If we don't learn from past failures we will inevitably repeat those failures. Networking and working together – helping each other in our endeavors, because we are all trying to reach the same goal – are keys to true success.

## Gearing Up for Work Camps!

by Alisha Young AmeriCorps VISTA

The time of year is here when SALS welcomes up to 3000 volunteers to help the residents of Fayette County with minor home repairs. We are anticipating a successful summer of painting homes, building porches, and building wheelchair ramps for the elderly in need. The volunteers come from around the nation with high hopes of bonding with these residents while completing work that they may have not had the chance to get done themselves. There are two separate camps in place where about 400 volunteers will be in each week to work at the homes designated by our AmeriCorps members. These volunteers like to bond with the residents by learning a little about their history as well as history of the Appalachia. SALS has been partnering with the Group WorkCamp Foundation for 10 years and will continue the tradition in future years.



Global volunteers sign T-shirt for SALS

## Spring Brings Volunteers

Debbie Spurlock

Well spring has come and so have the loads of volunteers. Young people from all over the United States travel to Beards Fork to set up for a week of work. Early Monday morning the folks are divided up to travel to the various job sites. After a hard days work they return to help with the after school program. Our kids really enjoy meeting people from different states. Some of the volunteers are college groups working on their spring break. Others, who are called Global Volunteers, are the professional folks who like to give their time to help others.

We enjoyed a chance to supervise a small group of Global Volunteers. At daily morning meetings they would come up with their word for the day. They would read their journal entry from the day before. We also discussed any issues they might have. We shopped for them, cooked their dinner and made sure they had everything they needed. Some of the volunteers even helped out with the Group Workcamp write-ups.

Yes, it's that time of year again. These kids, the Group Workcamp kids, are younger than the other volunteers. They range from middle school through high school age. Unlike the college and the global volunteers, these kids work on sites that the SALS folks locate and write up. On these sites the youth do a lot of painting and minor carpentry work. A lot of planning goes into this program long before the groups arrive. Approximately 180 sites are prepared for them.. They have to be visited, measured and written up with the repairs specified. The write-ups must have every accurate direction, to a tenth of a mile. Once the write-ups are done they are copied and mailed to Colorado where they choose the best projects for the program. Not only does this program help fix up the homes but it helps build self-esteem. It makes the people feel better about where they live. The older folks also enjoy the company. They bond with the groups and often keep in touch long after they are gone.

We are also staying busy with the Rehab Program. So many people are in need of major home repairs. Our list grows daily. We do not have a new source for funding. We are working with Director Joe Hatfield and the West Virginia Housing Development Fund on a new rehab project. The homes must be coal camp houses approved by Mr. Hatfield. The applicant must agree that if they move or die the money will be paid back at that time. We are constantly in need of money to do rehabs, so hopefully this works out.

We are also continuing our housing counseling. Almost anywhere you go to buy a home you are required to have at least eight hours of home-buyers education.

The SHARE Program is still going on at SALS. With times being so hard it's a great time to take advantage of the great deals the SHARE program offers. For information about the monthly packages, call Debbie at 304/779-2772.

# Construction Notes

by Vickie Smith, Construction Manager

Spring arrived and we had several volunteer groups take part on our Fayette County projects. These groups have worked on various rehabilitation projects and on the SALS dormitory project. This has enabled the Labor School to make great strides on all of our projects. The volunteers also helped with the after school program that is operated at the Beards Fork facility. It is amazing when you see familiar faces returning each year to volunteer in West Virginia. Our volunteers are wonderful people and they bring an enormous amount of energy and enthusiasm with them. It brings Spring to mind and the rapid growth that occurs during that season.

The Labor School construction crews do more than construction work in our community. They also volunteer when possible. A few examples of some of our volunteer ventures are a visit to the warehouse in Charleston. This is an example of two non-profits working together to make a difference in the lives of those in our state. We have also offered to participate in the landscaping of the new police department in Oak Hill, WV. One of our crews moved a woman from Oak Hill to Ansted. She was disabled and had no way of moving some personal items and a hospital bed.

I have been busy soliciting bids for our dorm project. I have also been doing a lot of typing and computer work. I have elected to do this in my spare time with the hopes of helping the organization obtain an apartment complex. My hope is that once we obtain the unit and bring it up to a decent standard, it will help with the need for housing and a way for the organization to become more sustainable in the future. May I also remind you that this is not my forte by any stretch of the imagination and I am sure that John will need new glasses before long from all the proof reading he has had to do. Also in my spare time, I have managed to complete my college degree at WVU Tech in Career & Technical Education.

As our economy weakens and people struggle to survive the labor school is also struggling to survive. We are operating with less of everything from smaller numbers in our crew size, less operating funding, less staff, less money for rehabs and fewer being able to be started. Several people in the organization spend countless late hours looking for funding and trying to come up with creative ways to keep our organization alive. It is obvious when you see e-mails stamped in the wee hours of the morning, I am sure that I speak for many of our staff when I state that we understand the services we provide are needed and will continue to be needed more so than ever for our county. We also know that this county is fortunate to have an organization that is able to make a difference in living conditions of the people who have given so much to this country.

We recently sent three of our young people to Washington DC to participate in a young leader's event. They

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*SALS staff and volunteers drywall finishing crew in new volunteer dorm being built at Beards Fork*

had a wonderful experience in the event and were proud to represent the organization. We are also proud of their participation in the event and look forward to their sharing of the experience with their fellow youthbuild/ americorp members. Our youth are making great strides in personal growth and development.

Our new AmeriCorps group from the Fayette Institute of Technology has started working with us at the dorm in Beards Fork. This group consists of six seniors, one from the masonry class and five from the building construction class. They are going to get a lot of drywall training time.

We also had a loss of one of our past supervisors, George Hensley, Jr. George passed away on February 19, 2009. He had been a supervisor for the Labor School for years and had been ill for some time. The staff, youth and previous volunteers that had the opportunity to learn from his construction knowledge will sadly miss him. May he rest in peace.

*In closing, here is a letter from one of our partner groups in Charleston:*

I wanted to write and let you know how grateful I am that the Lord had Vickie bring a big crew yesterday. We received in a complete tractor-trailer of Building Materials, which is wonderful. The challenge was that the counter tops and doors were not stacked to make our unloading of them easy. It took the combined muscles and imagination of everyone who was present to get the job done. I know that everyone got a good workout yesterday and are probably feeling it this morning. I appreciate SALS and the work you do and the way in which you have collaborated with Storehouse WV. I look forward to building that relationship in the future. Once again, thanks to you all.

In His Service, John deBlecourt, Executive Director,  
Believe in West Virginia

## Ron's Notes

*by Ron Yellets, Site Supervisor*

During the last few months, Ron Yellets and crew have been involved in a number of tasks on several jobsites. We have been on the Powell rehab, Gauley Bridge rental complex, and the dormitory. Most of the tasks included weatherization and painting, as well as massive efforts to clean up the Gauley rental complex that has just been left to run down. Ron's crew consists of Buck Shoemaker, Kenneth Price, and Wesley Yellets.

Along the way Buck Shoemaker successfully got his GED, and Wesley is only one part from getting his. Kenneth as usual, continues to be a hard worker and keeps a positive attitude about his purpose and what he is doing.

## Terry's Notes

*by Terry Black, Supervisor*

Our activities have been many. We have loaded countless supplies in and out of the buildings. We repaired each of the rental homes. We have been to Phillipi and to Charleston to pick up donated supplies. We have been working on Hilltop. We've been working on the Apartments. We have been working on the dorm. We have worked on SALS vehicles. We just started a new rehab site in North Page. And. On top of all that, we have run supplies to all crews and volunteers and completed house write-ups. Those on my crew are: Chris Buck, Wesley Jones, Brian Dabler, and Shane Moore.

## Ralph's Notes

*by Ralph Shockey, Site Supervisor*

The New Year is well under way and our volunteers are here again. This year, I have a new job site, which is the dormitory at Beards Fork. With the deadline approaching, our youth and volunteers have begun priming and finishing dry wall on several of the rooms. We have also begun the kitchen and dining area's drywall. The electrical, plumbing, and HVAC are under way and our electric should be hooked up and functional by the end of March. Completion of the Dorm is planned for the end of June, 2009. Here's looking forward to another great year.

## YouthBuild Update

*Kathryn South, YouthBuild Director*

This has been a rough Winter and Spring with all the cold and snowy weather. The alternative spring break

volunteers and Global Volunteer groups have brought a ray of sunshine with the energy and enthusiasm they bring to the area. It was a pleasure to meet and work with some of the young people who came through SALS' doors the last few months. The volunteers have been a big help too with getting things done with all of our projects. Most of the folks worked on the dorm for volunteers in Beards Fork. When this project is completed, we will be able to provide housing for more folks to come to do community service with our youth, meet the community folks, and learn more about the culture of the area.

Our YouthBuild members have participated in several trainings in the last few months, from banking to learning more about green building techniques. Our youth also used left-over materials that normally would go into the landfill to make crafts for sale to folks who come to our job sites. David Buck, one of our Youth-Build members, received his GED and is working on his NCCER certification.

NCCER is a nationally recognized construction course that gives the student a leg up when applying for jobs by having various certificates related to job skills.

Our YouthBuild members are also working toward their reduced half-time education award. Reduced half-time means that for 675 hours of service doing home repairs and other construction tasks the young person will earn \$1800 for additional training and education. This is a great opportunity for young people who want to go to college or do a votech course in a particular skill such as electrical, welding, or block laying.

Two of our YouthBuild members attended the Youth Caucus in DC this spring. Wesley Jones and Allen Holley left from Yeager airport on a Sunday afternoon to travel to DC for three days of intense training and socializing with other youth from all over the US. The two fellows also assisted with building a "green" house that was constructed on the National Mall and then loaded on a train car and shipped to Brownsville, Texas to another YouthBuild site. Green building is the big buzz word in the building trades. We do as much as possible to use all natural or renewable products, reuse items that would be thrown away, and recycled paper, cardboard, wood, metal, etc. in order to create more environmentally friendly homes.

Brenda Winter and I attended a YouthBuild training in Santa Fe, NM this Fall. Bethany Chaney who is contracted through RCDI Rural Development and YouthBuild USA to do technical assistance with rural sites was one of the trainers and she focused on jobs and the training needed to get our young people employed in the job market. Bethany has been working with the SALS group for over a year now. We first met her in Vermont last year and we have come to think of her as family. We trust her to keep us on track with the new requirements for the DOL programs. Bethany also visited our site this spring to do some follow-up work. Bethany works out of Caraboro, NC which is only a few hours from most of the rural sites in the Appalachian area.

# Summer is Here At SALS

by Vickie Mullins

The flowers are blooming. Summer is upon us and the After School program survived the winter. Some folks may wonder how SALS made it through the year since we lost our funding source. I say it was due to the help of staff, volunteers, and the community.

The children enjoy coming to SALS daily and receiving homework help. The program went well because of a caring staff, good food and a safe place to hang out for a couple of hours a day. We must continue to provide After School programs in Fayette County. Kids need somewhere to go once regular school lets out. Most families today, both parents work and in some cases grandparents have started doing volunteer work. Some receive a stipend, such as with the Foster Grandparent program. For the past several months the staff along with Mr. Payne (Community Volunteer) has been selling dinners to raise money for the After School program. Sales have been going very well. Folks like the fact that every Friday, they know that SALS has prepared meals, and the sales benefit the kids. Sometimes folks who order give more than the price of the dinner. They say, "Keep the change, use it as a donation".

SALS will continue to look for funding sources to run our kids programs. If we continue working together we can do good things!

## Beards Fork After School Program

by Charlene Newkirk

The SALS After School program in Beards Fork is where students of all grade levels attend four days of afterschool programs each week. This includes helping children with homework, wellness activities, recreation, special events, snacks and supper.

We have had a very successful year. We have had lots of kids this year. They have been working hard at keeping their grades up and doing arts and crafts to take home for Mother and Father's Day. They have had free time to enjoy with each other and have had lots of groups come from out of state to volunteer with the kids. Mr. Ray came down from the WVU Extension Services to help the kids plant flowers, workout in the exercise room, work on the computers in the computer room and go for walks on the walking trail.

I'd like to give a special thanks to the parents that come to help with the after school program and volunteer with the kids, and also the two ladies that help the children in the computer room and assisting the younger children with their homework.

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After school basketball behind the community center

## Energy Express at SALS

by Vickie Mullins

SALS staff is gearing up for its summer program (Energy Express), a six week program that teaches reading, writing, and art. The program is designed to help kids maintain their reading level or increase it by at least one grade level!

SALS have been hosting the program for about seven years along with its co-sponsor, WVU-Extension. Forty children along with five mentors, a site coordinator and a volunteer coordinator all work together to make the program successful.

The cook prepares two nutritional meals five days a week. The meals are served family-style to teach children table manners. The mentors assist the children with the food and everyone enjoys the family style set up because the children get to eat together. If your kids need a safe place to go during the summer send them to SALS! They'll interact with other kids, play non-competitive games, learn to enhance their reading, make new friends and be a part of a family!



Volunteers & after school kids interact after work



# Economic News is Deceptive

By John David,  
reprinted from 4-14-09 Charleston Gazette

Times are tough when economic spin prevails. For most of last year, pundits were reluctant to use the label "recession" for the economic situation. Today, the avoided word is "depression," which of course is accurate for current conditions.

Times are tough when economic spin prevails. For most of last year, pundits were reluctant to use the label "recession" for the economic situation. Today, the avoided word is "depression," which of course is accurate for current conditions.

Last week, the U.S. Department of Labor announced 663,000 job losses in March. This pushed losses above 5.1 million workers since January 2008. The spin was that this provided a "ray of hope" because, according to the McClatchy report, "the March job losses were consistent with what mainstream economic forecasts had suggested, providing a measure of relief that things are not worse than expected."

Or, according to Mark Vitner with Wachovia/Wells Fargo: "I think, that after months and months of getting worse-than-expected news, our expectations are in line now with where the economy is. As hard as it is to believe, it is a sign that things are getting better."

Using an analogy, this means if expectations are near total economic collapse and, in fact, there is near total economic collapse, then this is positive economic news simply because the bleak prediction was accurate - a conclusion anyone would conclude is silly.

The other spin revolves around the unemployment rate, which jumped to 8.5 percent. The accuracy of unemployment rates has been a contentious issue. Methods used by the federal and state data collectors are not identical, which contribute to varying sets of numbers. In addition, data are typically based on those seeking work at one-stop centers and telephone polling. Many West Virginians gave up long ago going to regional unemployment offices, and those who are unemployed often do not have phones.

Many economists routinely double or triple the reported numbers to gain a realistic measure, which would put the real jobless rate around 25 percent. Among youth and young adults, particularly minorities, it's substantially higher.

The meaning of unemployment can also be subject to misinterpretation. Basically, a job is counted as a job, even if a worker who lost a union job with benefits picked up a part-time job at minimum wage. Obviously, this situation creates two quite different incomes and creates two quite different impacts on the economy. Since jobs in West Virginia are migrating toward part-time minimum-wage work at the expense of manufacturing and mining, the economy

is sliding downward, even though this is not reflected in the unemployment rate.

In addition to the epidemic unemployment rate among young adults, the latest data contained a disturbing new development. The fastest-growing group of unemployed are part-time and temporary employees. Firms that shed jobs usually start by shuttering facilities that impact full-time employees. If operations continue at any level, workers are hired from "temp agencies" or relegated to reduced part-time hours. Now, even those who are part-time are provided pink slips.

The final blow to the relevance of announced unemployment rates has to do with misrepresentation. In reality, there is no relationship between the level of unemployment and whether people can live on what they make. A part-time worker who earns minimum wage may be statistically employed but doesn't earn a living wage. Now, even that lifeline is being severed.

Evidence that the problem is worse than claimed is demonstrated daily in other ways. Murders and the increased number of desperate survival actions, such as robberies and embezzlements, often triggered by gambling and substance addictions, are indicative of this. As a result, ironically, job counselors are able to promote careers in corrections as "recession-proof."

While stimulus initiatives are designed to reverse economic slide, it is nevertheless important that people recognize the extent that deceptive spin is camouflaging the magnitude of the crisis. People deserve more accurate reporting of economic reality.

## ACF Awards SALS Funding

The Appalachian Community Fund (ACF) has awarded SALS a grant to educate people about the housing crisis, provide housing counseling, and organize a grass-roots effort to support decent, affordable housing in a manner similar to the successful SALS initiative many years ago around health care that resulted in a major on-going campaign.

ACF also provided an organizing grant to Maya Nye and People Concerned About MIC (PCMIC) for which SALS is the fiscal agent. PCMIC has been on the front line recently in regard to exposing the dangerous chemical leaks and near calamities by Bayer CropScience at the Institute plant. For more information on PCMIC see: [www.peopleconcernedaboutmic.com](http://www.peopleconcernedaboutmic.com)

people and making our communities stronger, and service must become a part of each of our lives". She elaborated by stating:

**"The work you've done here is quite impressive, and the evolution of your work to include green building, something that we're talking more and more about as a nation, energy-saving practices, and environmental awareness, it demonstrates how YouthBuild has endured as a leading non-profit organization, keeping up with the times, making sure that the training and education that you get is current. However, for me, it's your core principle that I am so impressed with, of providing opportunities for amazing young people – amazing young people – giving folks a second, and third, and fourth chance, particularly low-income youth. Sometimes we overlook them, we think that they can't be, they can't do. And it's places like YouthBuild that help you to find yourselves all across this country, but to also complete high school and to graduate, and to do some really special things."**

Martin Luther King, III, who visited the SALS program in Fayette County two years ago and was introduced to YouthBuild at that time, spoke about the social justice movement. He noted the need to alleviate poverty by concurrently providing jobs and community development.

The Mall event included the "Parade of States" by the young adults. They marched with giant cardboard keys representing the number of affordable homes, including 170 in West Virginia, that YouthBuild has built or refurbished nationwide. video clips of the event are posted on [www.youthbuild.org](http://www.youthbuild.org) under news & press.

SALS has been part of YouthBuild for over a decade in Fayette County and the Upper Kanawha Valley. The program has enabled low-income young people with troubled backgrounds to transform their lives by serving their communities building affordable housing while gaining valuable job training and diplomas or GEDs. The program benefits the students as much as the families moving into new or remodeled homes. With its focus on green education, this year's national event expanded the program's benefits even further by encouraging construction of energy and resource-efficient homes that save money and help the planet.

The SALS program benefits from strong public support. John David, SALS Director, stated that the program has been successful in this area because of an excellent staff and cooperation with area businesses, labor unions, government, law enforcement, judicial personnel, and local citizens, many of whom have donated in many ways to sustain the program during difficult times. David paraphrased Senator John Kerry's comment at the event that we have already done so much – but we know we can do even more if we continued to work together as a team.

*SALS Journal*

## **Alisha Young:**

### **Investing in youths pays off**

Against all odds, I wanted to go to college. When I was in high school, my stepfather went to prison, leaving my Mom, my little sister and me to fend for ourselves. I got a job to help buy food and school clothes, and I looked after my sister. I knew I had to keep up my schoolwork. But the stress was too much for me. I started taking risks.

Amazingly, I made it to college, but I had a low tolerance for stress. A few semesters later, I dropped out. I eventually wound up at YouthBuild. At the time, I felt like a failure. But at YouthBuild, I learned to build houses and earned educational awards so I could go back to school one day. I learned to deal with problems so that I'm not so overwhelmed.

The teachers and staff don't tolerate any risky behavior. I attended peer counseling sessions to stay in the program and I was able to start anew.

Today, I'm a YouthBuild leader, and I'm well on my way toward going back to school.

Every year, thousands of young adults like me earn their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning job skills and earning money for building affordable housing for homeless or poor families in YouthBuild programs around the country.

It feels good to make money and help rebuild a community. It feels even better to rebuild your life. Many of my classmates go on to college or technical school. But many young people who need help aren't able to get it because there's not enough funding.

John David, director of the Southern Appalachian Labor School in Fayette County, which houses our YouthBuild program, tells me that every day.

It's like that nationwide. Last year, more than 14,000 young people couldn't get into YouthBuild programs because there was funding for 8,000.

President Barack Obama understands that not only do YouthBuild programs provide second chances to young people who need them most, but they also improve America's most distressed communities. He has said he wants to expand YouthBuild to help 50,000 youth a year. I'm glad we have his vote of confidence.

I'm also thankful to Rep. Nick J. Rahall, who has inspired me and my YouthBuild classmates by coming to our events and encouraging us to aim higher. I am glad that Rep. Shelley Moore Capito has been a champion for the program, and the support of Sens. Robert C. Byrd and Jay Rockefeller has helped keep our program afloat, even while

*Continued on page twelve*

# Southern Appalachian Labor School - Who We Are

**SALS Community Center: 800-515-1349,  
304-779-2772, or 779-2280**  
**WVU-Tech office: 304-442-3042**  
**Construction Coordinator: 304-469-9721**  
**John David, Director - 304-442-3157**  
**WEB: www.sals.info**

Ron Yellets	YouthBuild Trainer
Ralph Shockey	YouthBuild Trainer
Jimmy Adkins	YouthBuild Trainer
Terry Black	YouthBuild Trainer

**‘Accent Education’ After School Program:**

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Helen M. Powell	Chair
Marcus Wilkes	Vice Chair
Rick Wadsworth	Secretary /Treasurer
John David*	Director jdavid@citynet.net

Charlene Newkirk	Site Coordinator
Tony Canada	Project Director
Regina Gilbert	Experience Works
Ann Johnson	AmeriCorps/VISTA
Alisha Young	AmeriCorps/VISTA
Melissa Adkins	Teacher
Wilder Salter	Foster Grandparent

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Dr. Dan Doyle, M.D.

**Energy Express**

Anne Lathen

**G.E.D. Instructors/Fayette Co. Schools**

LeeAnn Gore & Mary Lynn Flint

**WVU Extension Service**

Debbie Tate

**Bookkeeping Team**

Valarie Cowley, Ruth Lanham  
Tom Bass, Brenda Winter



**Yes,** in these difficult times I understand the importance of an organization like the Southern Appalachian Labor School. Enclosed is my contribution to keep your essential work on track and moving forward. Contributions to SALS are Tax deductible: Mail to SALS POB 127, Kincaid, WV 25119

**Enclosed is: \_\_\_\$250 \_\_\_\$100 \_\_\_\$50\_\_\_\$25 Other\$\_\_\_\_\_**

*Or print a donation form at [www.sals.info](http://www.sals.info)*

*Please send me a thankyou gift..\_\_\_\$50 + Donors will receive a SALS License Plate, or similar item*

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Adress \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/St/zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

SALS engages in solicitation for the purpose of acquiring funds to support the Southern Appalachian Labor School. WV residents may obtain a summary of our registration and financial documents from the Sec. of State, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305. Registration does not imply endorsement.



This drawing is the design for the kitchen in the new SALS Dorm by Sadida David, a graduate of University of Charleston in Interior Design. Her Senior Project was designing the Commercial Kitchen in the new SALS Dorm. It was designed in close collaboration with staff who will be working in it to feed our volunteers.

*Alisah Young, continued from page 10*

the worsening economy has pummeled coalfield communities.

Yet YouthBuild still needs help. We need to support YouthBuild with millions of dollars to train 30,000 young people like me, who could build at least 2,000 units of affordable housing across the country. They could find jobs and homes of their own. I know it can happen, because I did it. I'm 23 years old and I now have my own place. I plan to enroll at WVU Tech next spring.

After graduation, I want to become a teacher.

My YouthBuild teachers have shown me what it means to invest in a young person, especially one whose dreams seemed weighed down by circumstances, long odds and life in general.

More money for YouthBuild would invest in thousands of young people and neighborhoods in need, helping the ailing economy.

It may sound like long odds, but I'm living proof that it can be done.

Young, of Montgomery, is an AmeriCorps VISTA member and is currently working with YouthBuild USA Young Leaders Council.

*SALS Journal*



The present kitchen in the SALS Community Building