



# SALS JOURNAL

*a publication of the Southern Appalachian Labor School*

Volume 33 Issue 1

[www.sals.info](http://www.sals.info)

Spring/Summer 2010

## ‘Growing Together’ about Gardening

*By Gary DeLuke/VISTA Volunteer*

Slowly but surely, the students in the after school program at SALS are being immersed in a weekly educational program in which agriculture serves as the basis for teaching healthy lifestyle choices, dietary nutrition, eco-stewardship, teamwork, and the importance of local food systems. The “Growing Together” program is collaborative effort between the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, City of Mount Hope, Fayette County Farmers Market, New River Gorge National River, Rural Appalachian Improvement League, Southern Appalachian Labor School, Southern Conservation District, and the wonderful citizens of Southern West Virginia. The goal is to promote healthy communities through garden-based education, all while introducing the youth of this area to farming, as a profession, and teaching them the economic, social, and environmental systems with regard to the realm of agriculture and food.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, we had a gardening kick-off at Mount Hope High School, in which youth from the SALS after school program came together with students from Mount Hope and participated in various activities, presentations, and games that relate to the program. They learned about pollution and runoff in watersheds, marketing and selling food products, and identifying plants and farming components. This was a small, but productive and fun start for the growing season.

Presently, the largest garden site in the program is at the SALS community center in Beards Fork, and there are a few other smaller sites in Mount Hope. We have seeded hundreds of plants that are sitting by some windows in the community center in Beards Fork, as well as in the community center and high school in Mount Hope, and the weather is almost suitable for planting them outside. The high-tunnel greenhouse in Beards Fork is standing tall and strong, and some of the plants have been moved there already. We are all looking forward to harvesting the fruits of our labor and selling them at one of the Fayette Co. Farmers’ Markets. Hope to see you there!

## 19<sup>th</sup> Solidarity Juneteenth and Emancipation Day

The flags will wave again to celebrate another year of good works here at SALS. On Sunday, June 13<sup>th</sup> at the SALS Community Center in Beards Fork, we will host our 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Solidarity Festival.

This will be our first time for a Sunday afternoon. As always, it will be a family event and in celebration of Juneteenth Emancipation Day. This year will have a special tribute to coal miners who have lost their lives or become seriously disabled in the mines. An impressive array of live music performances have been arranged. Games and activities will be available for kids.

There will be displays of various kinds, especially those informing attendees about many of the accomplishments of SALS both this year and throughout the years. Currently, SALS is spear-heading an effort for a U.S. postage stamp honoring coal miners and prototype designs will be on display.

The event will be held outside, however, in the event of inclement weather we will bring the celebration inside our roomy community center. Plan to join us for joyful day of celebration and sharing with friends old and new. As always admission is free!



*Jude Binder from Heartwood in the Hills performs at last year’s Solidarity Festival*

# Verizon Sale is Too Risky for WV

Gary Zuckett,

Reprinted from *Charleston Gazette*, April 7, 2010

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — On March 16, members from several organizations gathered outside the West Virginia Public Service Commission's office to deliver a tall stack of petitions containing the signatures of more than 5,000 West Virginians opposed to the sale of Verizon's land-based phone lines to Frontier Communications. If you have a hard-wired phone in your house or business, this sale could have a big impact on your service.

Verizon spends tons of money advertising and not nearly enough maintaining its landlines. I get a flyer from them in the mail two or three times a month, and one can't watch TV without viewing their wireless commercials. That's the point - they're promoting their wireless while letting their land lines rot, and they can't wait to shed them like a snake shedding its old worthless skin.

Verizon has already dumped their wired service in New England and Hawaii by selling to smaller companies in a complicated deal that left these smaller outfits holding millions in debt while Verizon walked away with tax-free millions through an obscure tax loophole. This is all well and good as corporations are in the business of making money. Except, in these other deals the smaller company had lots of problems integrating all their new customers and ultimately went bankrupt under the debt load while Verizon laughed all the way to the bank.

I know that Verizon has lots of problems with its land service, and I think it's totally intentional. They think wireless is the future and don't want to put good money into old technology. But customers who clamor for the company to be sold to anybody else in hopes of getting better service - beware! If you think your phone service is bad now, what will it be like if Frontier buys it then and goes belly-up?

And what about your phone bill? When Frontier needs more cash (remember all their debt?) to service all the old neglected Verizon equipment, they'll go to the PSC hat in hand and get a big rate increase.

Back to those petitions, the organizations represented at their delivery were Communications Workers of America Local 2001; AARP, the largest senior organization in the country; and West Virginia Citizen Action, the state's oldest consumer watchdog organization. These diverse

groups came together to protect the workers, consumers and especially seniors who would be adversely affected by any disruption in their telephone service or spikes in cost.

Much of our rural population has no other access to telephone service besides that old wire connected to their home. It is more than a convenience; it's a lifeline to the outside in case of fire, flood, health trauma or other disaster. The elderly are particularly at risk without a dependable communications outlet. We all depend on the timely help offered by dialing 911 when an emergency erupts, but even this essential service was disrupted for a time in New England after Verizon sold its lines. For more information on the dangers of this sale see [www.wvcag.org](http://www.wvcag.org).

Even the PSC's own staff and their Consumer Advocate's office called for the sale to be rejected as proposed because of the financial uncertainty and the undue risks to the citizens of our state.



Editor's note: Since this was written, the PSC unfortunately decided to approve the sale. However, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has the final say on this critical issue. It's time for all West Virginians to weigh in and contact the FCC to let their opinions count. Give them a call (while your phone still works) at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322)

p.s. While you're at it tell them that we desperately need high speed internet service in rural West Virginia too.

The SALS *Journal* is published by  
The Southern  
Appalachian Labor School,  
a grassroots organization dedicated to  
social & environmental justice  
and workers rights.  
We welcome articles and  
submissions by our readers.  
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[www.sals.info](http://www.sals.info)  
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or decline submissions.  
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*In the picture (left to right): John David, Ruth Lanham, Janet and David Green, and Jan Young*

### **Original SALS staffers return for a visit:**

They were the first staff members of SALS in the 1970's.

They met and married while with SALS. David and Janet Green came by for a recent visit to the new SALS.

Janet was born in Welch but was working at Highlander when we hired her. She conducted many classes for local unions in West Virginia and designed the SALS logo.

David was an organizer, coal miner, autoworker, and teacher who worked primarily in Boone, Logan, and Kanawha counties. He was a co-founder of SALS.

## **Director's Report**

*by John David*

The past period has been extremely challenging. In regard to staff changes, Brenda Winter has stepped back for health reasons. Brenda has been a veteran leader within the SALS Family and wore many hats. Transitioning onto the staff is Joyce Brown, who once worked with SALS and became a program officer with the WV Commission for Community and National Service.

Two new VISTAs have joined SALS. Angela Klosski is serving with the after school and summer programs. Barbara Painter is serving with the Green Building and Education initiative.

Reporting is the task that has become especially difficult. Since four of our grants are under the Recovery Act, reports must be regularly provided to the Obama Administration as well as to the agencies involved.

In regard to grants, it is the season again to re-submit to HUD, USDA, and DOL. In addition, we have an extensive number of other grants that are always due.

Since our last newsletter, we have received several grants. One was for the summer Explorations program from the WV Statewide Afterschool Network, which complements our renewed Energy Express grant.

Many local groups and individuals, including the Fayette Board of Education and the City of Smithers, have sent contributions for Energy Express, and we thank them all. We have also received support from the Fayette County Commission, Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation and BB & T for youth initiatives. Global Volunteers have provided us with some extra dollars to integrate participants with our community gardening program and the WV Housing Development Fund has increased our CHDO

funding for more single family homes.

The WV Housing Development Fund has also agreed to provide us with CHDO Home/Rent funds to rehabilitate the Regina Apartments in Gauley Bridge. It is expected that this project will cost several million and we have hired an architect-tural firm to prepare the bid documents.

The SAFE Act, which requires us to become a licensed mortgage agency, required staff to pass a difficult test. Few in the state have jumped the hurdle and Debbie Spurlock/Lisa Manley are pursuing this vigorously. Several on the staff including Kathryn South, Artie Mullins, John David, and Vickie Smith have traveled to meetings, as we work on grant and compliance issues.

Jean Harris, a long-time SALS supporter, has continued her involvement by donating supplies and books to the community gardening educational program. Support has also come from the Soil Conservation District.

This summer, over 3000 volunteers will be in Fayette County working on houses. SALS will be sponsoring Christian Endeavor and Group Workcamp volunteers who will be staying at WVU Tech and Valley High School. Also arriving will be the Appalachian Service Project and volunteers recruited through area Methodist and Presbyterian churches. SALS will also host several independent groups at the new Dorm facility in Beards Fork.

The new Dorm has already been used twice for disaster relief. During the heavy December snow, it provided lodging and the kitchen was used to prepare community food. During the spring flooding, the underpass to Beards Fork was impassable and several groups stayed at the facility longer than planned.

April 2010 was Fair Housing Month. Joyce Brown put together a program about SALS for residents in Upper Kanawha Valley at Montgomery City Hall on April 29. She

*Continued on page 10*

# YouthBuild News

by Kathryn South-Adkins, YouthBuild Coordinator

Our YouthBuild crews have been very busy this winter and spring trying to get caught up with projects and dealing with the constant snow falls and closed Vo-Tech classes. The Green classes are underway and the training for the Home Builders Institute certification is also coming along nicely. I attended a mentoring conference in Las Vegas in March. It was a very informative conference and over 50 YouthBuild sites were there hoping to apply for a mentoring grant that will give the youth more support in their future educational and career endeavors. The mentoring grant will serve youth ages 17-19. However, all age groups would benefit from a dedicated mentor.

We have recruited eight new members and hopefully two will be taking the GED test next month. Ms. Gore and Ms. Flint and all the tutors at vo-tech have been working tirelessly with our youth trying to get them ready for the GED test. This accomplishment is a milestone for our youth and gives them a better opportunity for job placement.

Two youth attended the Conference of Young Leaders in Washington, DC in March. Craig Fitzwilliams and Jeremy Bess represented SALS very well and met lots of new folks who share similar issues at their own sites around the country. Craig Fitzwilliams and Jeremy attended the SALS board meeting and informed the board members of their experiences in DC and how they liked going to Capitol Hill to meet the representatives. Each youth visited their own state representative to explain the YouthBuild program and how each program needed additional funding to keep the movement going to help more youth. Alisha Young, former YouthBuild member, also attended the conference. She is on the Youth Council and also attended meeting in Boston and Santa Fe to discuss policies that affect youth and ways to improve the program from the youth's perspective.

## After School and TYT at SALS

by Charlene Newkirk, Site Coordinator

This has been a challenging year for the after-school program. The program has around 25 children a day. The program is funded primarily by a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant through the WV Department of Education in collaboration with the New River Health Association and Fayette County Schools. The middle-high school component is funded through the WV After School Network at WVU Extension. The program is for children in grades kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. They are bussed after school from Oak Hill and Montgomery/Smithers schools to Beards Fork. When arriving at SALS the children receive a snack and a drink. They do their homework with the teachers. The children play outside, do art work, dance, science experiments, learn tips about current

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events, and learn to cook. We are also still working on the garden beds for the "Hoop" Green House Project. Then they eat dinner and we take them home on the vans. All the children took part in several field trips. Two of the recent trips were bowling and going to Camden Park. Previously, they took trips to the Clay Center, Youth Museum, and the WV Cultural Center Museum. Some of the parents and I had CPR classes. I also attended a nutritional and tobacco class in Charleston. Here is one of the recipes that the kids make: Kool Aid Pop - Make your Kool Aid pour the kool aid into an ice tray. Place took picks in the kool aid pop. Put the ice tray in the freezer for about 30 to 40 minutes (or until frozen) and serve.

## My New Experience as a VISTA

by Angela Klosski

My name is Angela Klosski. I am the new VISTA at the Southern Appalachian Labor School. So far this has been a great experience for me though I have been through some challenges since I have been here. I hope to see everything that I do become a success. So far I have arranged for a couple of CPR classes and they turned out great. The folks really enjoyed it and a valuable service was provided. Also I have arranged to make a Girl Scouts troop and a Boy Scout troop happen at the SALS Community Center. So far it is going great and we have some great things for the children. I have made these happen for the kids so that they can have some excitement and to learn great things. I am going to work as hard as I can to recruit volunteers and keep these clubs going on at the SALS Community Center. In addition, I have arranged for the 4-H leaders to meet with the kids and talk about activities along with other speakers. For example, I had Officer Mooney from the Fayette County Sheriffs Department come and talk to the children about destructive behavior. He demonstrated finger printing and the use of DNA swabs. I am real excited about what I can do for SALS and what is to come. We will see where it leads!!

## Mr. Bess Goes to Washington

by Jeremy Bess (with Craig Fitzwilliams)

It was my first trip to DC and the first time I have been out of our state. It was also the first time I have flown on a plane. When Craig and I landed, we did not know what to expect. There were people there everywhere in the hotel lobby. We instantly connected with other YouthBuild members because we found out that we are all a huge family.

We did not know what kind of an impact that YouthBuild had on the world. Once we all arrived at the hotel we met up in the conference room to discuss the schedule and activities that we would be doing while in DC.

We met each morning to go over our daily activities. We had five different classes to choose from which were: YouthBuild 101, Healthy Relationships, Going Green, Self



*Jeremy, Craig and Alishia visit with Rep. Rahall in his Washington DC office*

Identity and Future Business Management. Craig chose Healthy Relationships which was about building better relationships with our peers and partners. I chose Going Green which was about making the world a better place to live by using windmills to generate power and using solar panels instead of other sources to produce electricity.

In our free time, we watched movies and worked out in the weight room and went swimming in the indoor pool.

One of our best experiences was meeting the President of YouthBuild USA, Dorothy Stoneman and her husband John Bell. Their speeches were very inspirational and uplifting and encouraging to all the young people.

On the last day in DC, we went to Capitol Hill to talk with our representatives of Congress about our experiences in YouthBuild. We discussed how we could help to get the bill passed to increase the funding for the program so that more youth could be in YouthBuild.

Overall, we had a great time, we met a lot of cool people and we would love to go back next year and we felt honored to be chosen to represent SALS. YouthBuild !!!

*Note: Jeremy Bess and Craig Fitzwilliams are YouthBuild members selected to represent SALS at the annual Conference of Young Leaders in Wash., D.C.*

## **National Rural Youth Assembly**

*by Alisha Young, AmeriCorps VISTA*

I recently returned from my first trip to Santa Fe New Mexico and what an awesome trip it was. I was selected to go to New Mexico after a grueling application process. During my visit among 53 other young leaders from rural communities we channeled our thinking about what issues there were among rural communities and what we could do to change them. Surprisingly the issues we face such as high dropout rates, transportation, unemployment and poverty were the same issues that every young person faced in their home towns. During my four day stay we went to workshops and got to tour the Institute of

American Indian Arts which was phenomenal and also was where the conference was held. I am proud to represent Southern West Virginia as a young leader and am happy that I was given the chance to do so.

## **Conference of Young Leaders**

*by Alisha Young AmeriCorps VISTA*

Jeremy Bess and Craig Fitzwilliams were among 108 Young Leaders in the most recent trip to Washington D.C. for the COYL, (Conference of Young Leaders).. All were engaged in workshops on building leadership such as YouthBuild (101), Green Initiatives, and Healthy Relationships plus many more. These workshops were all helpful in giving new information while teaching how to bring out young leader qualities in YouthBuild programs back home.

We also did a bus tour of Washington D.C. and saw the White House, many foreign embassies, and the Lincoln & Jefferson Monuments. It was exciting to see our Nations' Capitol in a total other light.

The very last day of the journey was the most exciting; we were able to talk with our state Representatives, Nick Rahall and Shelly Moore Capito. Both visits were exciting since we were able to tell them about how important YouthBuild and SALS are and that we would love their continued congressional support. We then walked around Capitol Hill and stood where President Obama was sworn in. I am sure that our YouthBuild members who attended the conference now understand how important it is to graduate from our program and to continue to become great young leaders.

## **Construction Manager Report**

*by Vickie Smith*

Our home rehabilitation program is moving forward at a rapid pace. We have completed five rehabs in the past several months. Our rehabs are quite work intensive and are basically complete overhauls. It is my hope that all current rehabs will be completed before the year ends.

One of our new homes has a proud new owner. We currently have four other new structures at our Hilltop location. People are interested in these units and would like to move in as soon as they are finished. We need to have two new foundations installed on our two remaining lots. Once these homes are finished we will have completed our third development.

I am currently managing the rental of seven houses on Rt. 61 and 28 apartments in Gauley Bridge. These units are being maintained by our youth. We also maintain the building in Kincaid that is used by the Labor School and the Kincaid Post Office.

We now have volunteers staying in our newly constructed dorm in Beards Fork. It is a beautiful building of which we are very proud. It was the Labor School's first commercial construction experience. Our youth received great training while constructing the building. All of our

projects give our youth the training in all phases of construction from the ground up.

We are now finishing the construction of our Green Lab. This structure is for the lab portion of our training for the youth in green technology. We are training to use a blower door, duct pan, infra red gun and a power monitor. These items will be used on our new construction to test for tightness of our structures. We will test our rehabs before we start and upon the completion of the work. This will enable us to document how well we have sealed our rehab units. Our youth can earn certificates in PAC and various college certificate programs. We are also encouraging them to continue their education in green construction. Green building construction is the new and up coming

## Construction News

*by Jimmy Adkins, Site Supervisor*

We rehabbed Bobby McMillion's house. This included the roof, kitchen, living room, bathroom, 2 bedrooms, vinyl siding, and windows. It was a project that the family was thankful to have us do.

We went to the Graves site in North Page to finish a job started a year or so ago. We completed Ms. Graves bedroom with an attached bath, completed the living room floors, walls, and wiring. We installed cabinets in the kitchen, new sink, new wiring and flooring. The siding was half completed when we showed up and we completed that task. The back side of the roof was completed and we had to redo the front side due to leaks. Thus, we resheeted and shingled the front, and have completed the electric upgrade. I have new crew members, Keith Vickers, William Austin, and Andrew Weber.

*by Terry Black, Site Supervisor*

This year we've been working on the Raines Building. We have the framing and electrical done. We turned it into a two story building and are in the process of getting the sheetrock and mudding done.

We have had numerous volunteers helping with the Raines Building and it has been a great year so far. Personally, I've been through a training for the Boy Scouts and I have volunteered to be one of the leaders. Craig Fitzwilliams and Jeremy Bess will also be involved in the Boy Scouts. We have all attended the leadership training at the Fayette County Park.

*by Ralph Shockey, Site Supervisor*

It has been a long, cold winter at SALS. But, though the snow came, we finished Suzanne Day's house and even built a wheelchair ramp for Aletha Boles in Oak Hill, WV with the help of some of the volunteers.

Also, among our travels, two of our youth, Craig Fitzwilliams and Jeremy Bess went to Washington, D.C. and represented SALS at a national YouthBuild USA Young Leader's Conference. Thank you for a great year.

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*Volunteers from Christian Endeavor repair a roof*

## Miner's Widows to Benefit from new Health Reform Law

*by Debbie Wills, Black Lung Counselor*

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 includes several provisions that amend the Black Lung Benefits Act. Section 1556(b) removes the requirement that eligible survivors must establish that pneumoconiosis caused, contributed to or hastened the miner's death. This provision applies to widows of miners who were receiving benefits at the time of their deaths. This requirement is removed from claims filed after January 1, 2005 and that are pending on or after March 23, 2010. These claims will be reviewed by the Department of Labor and claim decisions will be reconsidered under the new law.

In order to protect the potential rights of all widows, advise all widows whose husbands were receiving Black Lung benefits at the time of death to request modification or, if applicable, re-file their claim and ask that the new claim be considered under the new law.

At this time, it is uncertain when those claims will be awarded as either party to the claim can protest the decisions. The expectation is that representatives of the coal industry will protest any favorable (to the widows) decisions on re-filing. It is unknown how this will affect the new claims but it still would be appropriate to advise widows to file or re-file under this new law.

*Note: Debbie Wills is a member of the SALS Board*

## Earth Day Recognized at SALS

On April 22, 2010, the Southern Appalachian Labor School celebrated Earth Day with TYT (The Youth Thing) and The 21<sup>st</sup> Century After School program.

VISTA Volunteers, John Flack and Gary DeLuke, along with Charlene Newkirk of 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Lorien

*continued on page ten*

## Housing Counseling

by Lisa Manley

Since coming back to SALS part-time, I have been learning about the housing program. There is a lot more to it than most people think (including me). There are so many guidelines, reports and paperwork. It has been overwhelming but Brenda and Debbie are great to work with. I have been learning about REHABS, new housing, and Group Workcamps just to name a few of the programs at SALS.

I have also attended several trainings to prepare me for a Mortgage Brokers test. So next time the newsletter comes out hopefully I will be a licensed mortgage broker. If for some reason I don't pass the test please don't mention it.

## Housing News

from the desks of Debbie Spurlock and Brenda Winter

This past few months has been busy ones for us as we try to help people obtain new homes. We have had several trainings which help us abide with new rules and regulations in the housing industry. We have also brought on a new person to assist with housing as more and more people want assistance in safe and affordable homes. Credit issues are a big problem when it comes to buying a home and we assist people in clearing up these issues. Sometimes this is a long process in which we must help contact the creditors after reviewing the credit report and steer the prospective homebuyers in the right direction. In order to obtain a loan through USDA or the West Virginia Housing Development Fund, clients must have an eight hour homebuyers education class for which they obtain a certificate. We provide these services and have several referrals since we are the only one in Fayette County that is certified to provide this class. Recently, we have had three home closings, which have made three families very happy.

It's sad to see how many people are living in such poor housing conditions. We receive at least one phone call a day about someone needing home repairs, usually more. There are various grants that folks can apply for, a Housing Preservation Grant through USDA, a Federal Home Loan Bank Grant through United Bank and a grant through the West Virginia Housing Development Fund which requires that the home be a "coal camp house." Most of the homes are in such bad shape that we have to combine the grants just to bring the homes up to code. Sometimes we even have Group Workcamp volunteers assist with the rehabilitation process. Group comes in the summer to do minor projects such as interior and exterior painting, minor carpentry repairs and construct porches and wheelchair ramps. All in all the rehab process is a long drawn out project, but in the end the families have a safe and warm place to call home.

We have also helped many folks through our SHARE and FEMA programs. SHARE is a program where you can receive approximately fifty dollars worth of food for twenty dollars on a monthly basis by volunteering at least two hours a month to help someone out. The packages always contain meats, fresh fruits and vegetables, and various other items. Through the FEMA we help people with termination notices on their utilities and offer them an emergency food box each month if they qualify.

So, as you can see there is plenty of work to do, people to help and calls to answer.

## Energy Express 2010 at SALS

by Vickie Mullins

The Southern Appalachian Labor School will be hosting a Energy Express program this summer for the twelfth year in cooperation with WVU Extension and AmeriCorps. We are the only site in West Virginia that is held in a Community Center. Energy Express is a six-week summer program where forty kids engage with an AmeriCorps Mentor. The kids are divided into groups of eight or more, and we have five classrooms, each with one College Mentor.

We transport the kids to our center, feed them a nutritional breakfast and lunch and then they explore the world of reading, art, and painting. The kids spend about 5 ½ hours a day here at the center. On Fridays, they all receive a book to take home that tells about family, friends, and their community where they live. Energy Express is not only educational, but it is fun, kids enjoy the program because they interact with their peers and are able to read a lot of fun, exciting books. We also have teenage volunteers that interact with the kids. Every year we have an Open House and invite our local sponsors, school board officials, local area businesses, government officials, and contributors who help make the program a success. Without our sponsors, the program would not run smoothly. We commend the coordinator and the AmeriCorps Mentor's for doing such a fine job here at SALS.

## Homebuyers Class Offered

by Debbie Spurlock, Joyce Brown, Lisa Manley

SALS offers an 8 hour Homebuyers Education class on a monthly basis. This class is required by lenders for new home owners. The class teaches how to obtain a loan, how to look for a home, budgeting home maintenance and how to keep your home. At the completion of the class a certificate is issued. The certificate has to be given to the lender proving the applicant completed the class in order to obtain a home loan.

If you are interested, call Debbie, Lisa, or Joyce at 304/442-3042 or write us. Classes occur frequently, both one-on-one and group sessions.

## SALS Joins Trout Unlimited on Loup Creek Assessment

On Saturday, May 8, 2010, some of the students and staff in the TYT (The Youth Thing) after school program at SALS joined with the Trout Unlimited organization for a field trip to Loop Creek, a/k/a Loup Creek, depending on where along the creek you live, to evaluate the health and conditions of the stream prior to the opening of the new sewage treatment plant at Ingram Branch to begin operations soon.

Under the supervision of Larry Orr, of Trout Unlimited, we divided into four (4) groups to measure such things as depth and velocity of the stream, the types of stones and rocks to be found within a given area, the wildlife and insects to be found, and studies of types of insects and quantity to be found. We also performed chemical experiments on the water to determine its hardness, acidity, metallic content, oxygen levels and other information needed to determine the quality of the stream.

Loup Creek is a natural trout stream enjoyed by many fishermen and children over the summer months. It was determined that the chemical content and oxygen levels were good, however the insects required to sustain the fish were in short supply – and this followed a ½ inch of rain the night before the trip and testing. In addition, we discovered a type of aquatic worm in large numbers than was healthy for the creek. Translation: Loup Creek needs further cleanup.

The trip was exciting, fun for all, and those from SALS plan to participate in the testing performed next Fall. We hope, by then, even more volunteers from our program will be able to participate.

## WV Music Hall of Fame at SALS

The West Virginia Music Hall of Fame's new Traveling Music Exhibit arrived at the SALS Community Center in Beards Fork on the afternoon of May 17th.

The exhibit is housed in a striking 28-foot, handicapped accessible trailer. Once inside, viewers experienced the rich variety of West Virginia music through artifacts, recordings, historical photographs and documents. Two listening stations, filled with the music of many of the featured artists, brought the displays to life. The exhibits showcased the breadth of music that has come from our state – from opera and jazz to gospel, traditional, country, bluegrass, blues and rock 'n' roll.

In addition, the exhibit housed a "make your own CD" recording studio that enabled visitors to record a song, accompanying themselves on guitar or keyboard, and leave with a finished CD.

A Hall of Fame staff person will took visitors through a musical tour of West Virginia. By touching a county, visitors accessed photos, bios and sound/video clips of

local musicians. The music styles ranged from country, traditional to classic, blues, bluegrass, gospel, opera and rock that featured Hazel Dickens, Brad Paisley, Frankie Yankovia, The Lilly Brothers, Charlie McCoy, Nat Reese, Little Jimmy Dickens, Bill Edd Wheeler, Bill Withers, and many other West Virginians who left their mark on the rich and varied music of the United States.

The free event was co-sponsored by the WV Department of Education, Explorations After School, and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century "Accent Education" Community Learning Center with SALS, Fayette County Schools, and the New River Health Association.

## Fayette Group Wants Stamp Honoring Coal Miners

*The director of a community development group in Fayette County wants the U.S. Postal Service to issue a commemorative stamp honoring coal miners.*

*By Paul J. Nyden, Staff writer Charleston Gazette*

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The director of a community development group in Fayette County wants the U.S. Postal Service to issue a commemorative stamp honoring coal miners.

"We will try to get as many folks as possible to join us in asking the Postal Service to consider this as a fitting tribute to all those who contributed their lives to mining coal for this country, making it a great nation," John David, director of the Southern Appalachian Labor School, said Friday.

"A few days ago, the Postal Service issued a new stamp honoring cowboys," said David, social sciences chairman at the West Virginia University Institute of Technology. "They should definitely issue one honoring coal miners."

Sen. Randy White, D-Webster, who was meeting with David on Friday, said, "That would be great. We have a special session coming up. We have to see if we can get the governor to make that request more formal."

The special legislative session begins on May 13.

Matt Turner, spokesman for Gov. Joe Manchin, said he is sure the governor would be interested in the idea of issuing a stamp in honor of coal miners.

The Legislature might consider passing a joint resolution encouraging the Postal Service to issue the stamp, Turner said.

"The governor would be supportive of anything to recognize the incredible contributions West Virginia coal miners have made to our nation," Turner said.

Joyce Brown, who works with SALS, said anyone can "get a whole packet of information from the Postal Service. And Henry Louis Gates is one of 14 members on the board that makes decisions about new stamps."



# Bodies In The Holler

His name is howardnickpatrick  
Peterantontony

He marks a holy place  
where seams of coal sparkle in the light  
of safety lamps  
like black diamond chokers  
pressing on chests that gulp for air  
and suck in. dust which  
stains pink lungs black

tap-tapping, he goes bucketsfull deep into the earth  
to tunnels dug by men with worm-like tenacity  
who take and dump  
          take and dump  
chiseling and hammering  
in the dust and gas  
moving from place to place on carts  
whose groaning wheels  
sing a prophetic dirge  
to the next spark that explodes the deadly air

spewing mules and ponies  
timber, bent steel, rocks of coal  
and body parts like musket balls fired  
from a gun barrel

fragile widows pullout their hair  
disfigure their faces with cracked nails  
while no less fragile men  
back down into the silent womb  
to quicklime the mules  
bring out bodies  
frozen in the dust  
weird juxtapositions  
no head  
hugging brothers  
a father holding his *son*  
one sits biting a sandwich  
another kneeling  
to make the sign of the cross  
in the dust

Eli, Eli, lama sabachmani  
my God, my God. why hast Thou forsaken me?

swollen bodies rip open their clothing  
are bagged  
dumped on mules  
for the journey up to undertakers  
who dress them in extra-large  
ten dollar suits, white shirts and ties  
for the return trip underground  
where crosses bear their names  
Dan Gravely, Clarence Quickly



Earl Belcher  
ironic alongside the poetic Tony Jenony  
whose memory for a time  
will withstand time  
unlike the transients whose name tags  
fall from wooden stakes  
on top of wooden coffins

crowds come in their meeting clothes  
watch and wait  
watch and wait  
until the last call and moan  
is silent

except for the one tap-tapping  
deep in the bowels  
that can never be reached

he is the Ground upon which we stand  
marking a holy place  
His name is jessecharlesignaty  
lawrenceisaiahhelek

from *A Quiet Conversation*, by Gerald Brooker

## Little Progress in Mine Safety since Sago Disaster

*John David, reprinted from Charleston Gazette, 4-8-10*

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — Many will investigate the Massey disaster at Montcoal, looking for the spark, the fault, the cause. While that process is critical, several broader observations should be also noted.

First, while considerable progress might occur for emergency response after an accident, little progress appears to be made with systems for mining coal more safely. For example, since the 2006 Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act passed as a result of the International Coal Group's Sago Disaster, Ken Ward Jr. of *The Charleston Gazette* noted that Massey's Montcoal mine had 500 violations and nearly \$1 million in fines,

*Continued on next page*

### *Mine Safety, continued from page nine*

mostly pending or contested and on-hold. Ten percent were serious “unwarranted failure” violations, which was a rate five times the national average.

Since 1995, the *Charleston Daily Mail* noted, the mine has received more than 3,000 violations, including 1,300 that were substantial. While safety worsened and violations were contested, coal production tripled and hours worked increased more than 20 percent.

Unbelievably, Massey CEO Don Blankenship continued his cavalier attitude in a Metro News post-disaster interview by proclaiming that, “any suspicion that the mine was improperly operated or illegally operated . . . would be unfounded.” He blamed government regulators for allowing the mine to remain open and, echoing Tony Boyle’s famous quote at Mannington in 1968, said “violations are . . . a normal part of the mining process.”

Second, almost all the disasters since Farmington/Mannington in 1968 have been in nonunion mines. In fact, 1968 was a turning point for the UMW, as Boyle was replaced by a Miners for Democracy movement that focused on Black Lung, mine safety and passage of the 1969 federal Coal Mine Safety and Health Act (MSHA) as well as the 1970 Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA).

Union miners took advantage of MSHA and contractual language that permitted miners to refuse to work if they felt conditions were unsafe, and established mine safety committees that inspected operations on company time. Both practices were costly to the companies and contributed to their efforts seeking to become union-free.

The increase of nonunion operations has contributed to a rise in safety and health problems. Recent studies have indicated that the incidence of Black Lung is increasing. In addition, nonunion miners are, in essence, “at will” employees, which means they can be fired for any reason any time, without recourse. Such a threat during troubled economic times encourages risk-taking and deters unilateral actions that would target miners for scrutiny and eventual termination. As a result, miners who raise concerns do not want to be identified.

Third, to counter the protection of the union contract and grievance process, nonunion companies are telling miners they are now adequately protected by the government with federal and state inspectors. These inspectors, who struggle with immense responsibility and workloads, are employed by agencies that are understaffed and often provide inadequate training, as documented in a recent Department of Labor audit of MSHA. In essence, miners are told to trust the company and the inspection process, instead of their instincts, common sense, experienced observations and monitoring devices.

Massey even bragged that it had conducted an in-house survey of employees and found that 90 percent felt that the company is looking after their own safety.

A hundred years ago, it was often said that mules were considered more valuable than miners because

miners could be readily replaced while mules had to be bought. One can look at the current scene and almost make the same analogy. Companies know that miners can be replaced. The corporate strategy is performance mining, which translates into taking risks to avoid costly shutdowns and fighting inspection citations that involve violations and fines.

Organizationally, firms set up independent legal subsidiaries to control liability and adverse judgments. They even subcontract out mining sections to outside manpower firms in order to avoid liability and fringe-benefit costs that would be incurred by actually hiring people.

We all know that accidents can always happen, but, then again, a lot is known about mining systems, roof falls, methane, ventilation and coal dust. One wonders why the owner of any operation cited frequently in those categories would not compassionately invest resources to minimize risk instead of focusing on production and profits.

Each coal miner at Massey’s Montcoal mine generated \$1.2 million in revenue to the company each year. This return should have been adequate to provide a safe workplace for them.

In the long run, the firm pays reduced fines, finances political elections, compensates executives royally and basically escapes unscathed, while mining families are left without loved ones and with lingering memories of where the flowers have gone. The answer, my friends, is that they are gone to graveyards, every one.

*David, a WVU Tech professor, is a Gazette contributing columnist.*

### *Earth Day, continued from page six*

MacAuley of Rural Appalachian Improvement League took the group on a field trip around the SALS grounds. Their mission of discovery encompassed learning about the different plants and trees on the property and their ecological benefit to the atmosphere.

The children, under the instruction of DeLuke and MacAuley, received hands on experience planting fruits and vegetables in the newly constructed high tunnel greenhouse. In addition to a discussion on the history of Earth Day, they spent the remainder of the day’s celebration talking about the production of carbon dioxide and oxygen through plant life and the different uses of plants, trees and soil in society.

### *Director’s Report, continued from page three*

was joined at the event by VISTA Alisha Young and together they met with about a dozen people. Other activities occurred on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Earth Day, and AmeriCorps week.

The coal mining disaster at Montcoal was a numbing reminder how vulnerable we are and how fragile life has become. The tragedy has impacted everyone and SALS extends its sympathy to all of the families. The miners left behind 16 children of age 18 and under, in addition to other family members.

# Southern Appalachian Labor School - Who We Are

## SALS Community Center

304-779-2772, or 779-2280

WVU-Tech office: 304-442-3042

Housing Counseling: 304-442-3042

Construction Manager: 304-469-3792, fax 469-9721

John David, Director - 304-442-3157

Joyce Brown, Administrator - 304-442-3156

Ruth Lanham, Admin. Assistant - 304-442-3157

www.sals.info

### Board Officers

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

### Project Staff

Kathryn South-Adkins*	YouthBuild/AmeriCorps/DOL ksouth@citynet.net
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Artie Mullins*	Volunteer/Building Coordinator/ AmeriCorps artiemullins@earthlink.net
Lisa Manley	Housing Counseling
Ralph Shockey	Youth Build Trainer

\* Indicates members of the SALS Leadership Team

Jimmy Adkins  
Terry Black  
Andrea Bowman

YouthBuild Trainer  
YouthBuild Trainer  
WVU Graduate/  
Community Works

### AmeriCorps/VISTA

Angela Klosski	AmeriCorps/VISTA
Alisha Young	AmeriCorps/VISTA
Gary DeLuke	AmeriCorps/VISTA
Barbara Painter	AmeriCorps/VISTA
John Flack	AmeriCorps
Joe Neeley	AmeriCorps

### 'Accent Education' After School Program, and Explorations "The Youth Thing" After School Program

Charlene Newkirk	Site Coordinator
Tony Canada	Project Director
Regina Gilbert	Experience Works
Debbie Ferri & Dorothy Rudy	- Teachers
Wilda Salter	Foster Grandparent

### Energy Express

Sarah Clemins, Site Supervisor;  
Tyler Hughes, Community Coordinator;  
Mentors: Hannah Fox, Sarah Boyd, Sherain Thomas,  
Erik Reynolds, Alex Preast

### New River/Beards Fork Health Clinic Project

Dr. Dan Doyle, M.D.

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

LeeAnn Gore & Mary Lynn Flint

### WVU Extension Service

Debbie Tate

Cassandra Bandy

### Bookkeeping Team

Valarie Cowley, Ruth Lanham

Tom Bass, Brenda Winter, Debbie Spurlock



**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: \_\_\_\$1,000 \_\_\_\$500 \_\_\_\$250 Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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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.



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**POB 127**  
**Kincaid, WV 25119**

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